

# Chris Brink



*Anatomy of a  
transformer*

*Edited by  
Amanda Botha*



*Chris Brink*

*Anatomy of a transformer*

Editor

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SUN PRESS

*Chris Brink: Anatomy of a transformer*

Published by SUN PRESS, a division of AFRICAN SUN MeDIA Pty. (Ltd.)

Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch 7600

[www.africansunmedia.co.za](http://www.africansunmedia.co.za)

[www.sun-e-shop.co.za](http://www.sun-e-shop.co.za)

Cover photograph: With recognition to *Rapport*

Photo's: With recognition to Anton Jordaan and Hennie Rudman, SSFD

Design and page layout: Ilse Roelofse

Concept design: Heloïse Davis

Cover design: Ilse Roelofse

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ISBN: 978-1-920109-80-6

e-ISBN: 978-1-920689-37-7

DOI: 10.18820/9781920689377

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*Preliminaries*



## FOREWORD

### Looking to the future

At the time of Prof. Chris Brink's inauguration as seventh Vice-Chancellor and Rector one was aware, as is appropriate on such occasions, that the University of Stellenbosch had reached another milestone in its history. A milestone always takes one's mind back to the route travelled so far; at the same time there is also a powerful expectation of what lies on the road ahead in the future.

The words of the famous English poet, TS Eliot, who visited this country more than fifty years ago, are highly appropriate in trying to grasp a historical event:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future.  
And time future contained in time past ...  
And all is always now.



In one of his essays Eliot also described the situation of a man with great individual talent who is called upon to take his place in a highly respected tradition:

He is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

In our contemplation of the multidimensional significance of a historical moment, we could also consider an image that appears in one of the earliest documents in the history of our alma mater: the *Gedenkboek van het Victoria Kollege*, published in 1918, the year in which Stellenbosch University was established as a fully-fledged institution for higher education. In this foundation year of the University, this book looks back over the previous fifty years of the old College in which it has its roots. The occasion should thus be understood, say the compilers of the *Gedenkboek*, as "the meditative soliloquy of the fifty-year-old", who is on the verge of taking on something new and great in the full consciousness of the responsibility of doing so. They add that this man, "who intends to jump over a wide ditch, takes a few steps back to build up the necessary steam or momentum to make the long jump successfully". In the same way the man who accepts the responsibility and the adventure of taking this dangerous jump into the new is borne up and along by that which is living in history and memory.

Prof. Brink started work here under challenging but favourable circumstances. At the start of the new millennium Stellenbosch University, with its fine and rich traditions, was intensely involved in processes of change, innovation and re-evaluation of its resources and potential to enable it to contribute sufficiently to the wellbeing of the people in our country and on the continent, as well as to

the academic and scientific communities abroad. One could say there was a wave of energy giving him momentum in his bid to expedite these processes.

At Prof. Brink's inauguration there was thus a moment of balance between what had been and what was to come.

With his proven talents as an excellent academic and researcher, he had to take on the great responsibility of adopting a leadership role at a time of change and to make his contribution to the history of the University. He could use the opportunity to make the always risky, always adventurous jump into the future freely and with confidence.

Innovation was a compelling part of his task. The creative person, the person geared towards spiritual growth, is continually preoccupied with regeneration in his life. The same applies to a vital institution such our University, which must remain oriented towards serving the needs of the future in creative ways.

Innovation is in no sense a trivial undertaking. It is also not simply a matter of survival. In essence it is the necessary task of regularly opening up our fundamental values to re-examination, to preserve us from becoming rigid – thus in effect going into a decline – and even from error, to free us to strive for higher things and to keep our focus on the future.

The open discussions between the University and all those who had an interest in its wellbeing and ideals, which were the hallmark of this process and led to the Strategic Framework of 2000, were continued. "Open discussion" – this is a concept strongly associated in South African discourses with the poet-philosopher, NP van Wyk Louw. In his collection of essays *Maskers van die erns* (1955) he describes this phenomenon as "discussions in which you can talk about everything, in which no opinion is too risky", in which all forms of life – even the strangest – "can be approached from all angles, and where the discussion would not ever lead to insults, conflict, anger".

In many forums, especially in discussions within the University, this ideal was maintained. Outside observers would have noticed, however, that "insults, conflict, anger" were not absent in the public domain.

But the discussions, the processes to implement the directives of the Strategic Framework, continued, had to continue – the University was committed to this. The Strategic Framework was given concise expression in Vision 2012. The collection of essays presented here tell parts of the story of Stellenbosch University's growing awareness, under the leadership of Prof. Chris Brink over the past five years, of its commitment "to an outwardly directed role in South Africa, Africa and globally".

During these years neither the University nor its environment remained unaltered. One of the features of our changing world is the increasing realisation of the threat to – even the destruction of – moral values in our society.

To quote TS Eliot again: he created the phrase "the waste land" to serve as the title for his awesome poetic vision of what he referred to in another context as "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history". This is a vision of a world that craves meaning and guiding principles, like longing for rain in a barren wasteland.

In discussions and in writing, in a world where we are surrounded with turbulent, uncertain and dangerous things, we often read and hear of the desire for a new sense of values – values that can give us direction in what our great Stellenbosch poet, DJ Opperman, has called “the grey land”. The following lines from his poem “Negester en Stedelig” are well known – the words of a father to his child:

What map or what star can I show you  
To guide your journey through the grey land?

In its apparently self-enclosed and rural existence the University of Stellenbosch has experienced wars and rumours of war; great historical shifts that often led to a confusion of values. Through all the decades of its existence the University has regularly had to reflect intensely on the principles according to which it conducts its business, and found that old values had to be confirmed but also to be newly formulated.

The University of Stellenbosch has once again explicitly had to define itself as a value-driven institution. Our “map and star”, the nine values – equity, participation, transparency, service, tolerance and mutual respect, dedication, scientific integrity, responsibility and academic freedom – upon which the Strategic Framework, Vision 2012, is based, must be evident and experienced in the formulation of our aspirations.

Now that we are bidding Prof. Brink farewell after five years to take up his post as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle in the United Kingdom, we stand once again at a milestone in the history of our University. Prof Brink is handing over the reins – or is it the baton? – to Prof. Russel Botman. I prefer the baton. Neither of my two valued friends is a driver; they are essentially participants: but participants not in a roundabout race, but a race towards ever new horizons.

We thank Prof. Brink for undertaking the race on behalf of the University of Stellenbosch up to this point with such dedication and sense of responsibility, with such distinction and prudence.

We pay tribute to him for the excellent way in which he fulfilled his duties in a changed and still changing society, as custodian of the venerable values of the University of Stellenbosch.



*Elize Botha*  
Chancellor





# INTRODUCTION

It is customary at the University of Stellenbosch to produce a commemorative volume when a rector leaves the University. In terms of content such publications have in the past tended to be anecdotal, with a variety of biographical contributions or expressions of appreciation. In principle this publication continues that tradition, but in terms of content the emphasis has shifted towards the volume being a survey of, and report on, the events that marked the five years of Prof. Chris Brink's term of office as Vice-Chancellor and Rector.

Prof Brink was not in favour of a biographical publication. This book is therefore an attempt to compile a contemporary document to serve as a record of his term of office. Unlike previous rectors of the University, he did not retire from his post, but resigned just before the commencement of his second term to take up a post of rector abroad.

The contents of this publication present an account of the transformation process initiated by him, as contained in his key speeches and documents. This information was published on the University's website at regular intervals between 2002 and 2006, while the three essays on transformation are presented as an overview of his term of office.

Seeing that the source documents were in the public domain, they are presented unaltered in order to preserve their authenticity. In the editing only the time references or other indications that had a bearing on the specific occasion, and are of no relevance here, were removed. (Examples are the removal of words such as "Good evening ladies and gentlemen" "tonight"; "yesterday" and the concluding words "thank you" and "thank you very much". Only one sentence has been left out of a text – in the document "On transformation and quality", the speech delivered at a meeting in 2005, which mentions that the University's annual reports would be available outside the venue after the meeting.) Otherwise the texts have been left unchanged, with only minimal changes to punctuation.

The particular style in which Prof. Brink writes has been respected. At his request, there has been minimal editing of the texts. It should also be mentioned here that there was no significant stylistic editing of the other contributions.

In order to contextualise the key speeches and contributions Prof. Brink has written a brief introduction to each one. In some cases there was strong reaction in the public and the private domains. For the sake of historical continuity, therefore, these speeches are followed by responses in the media.

Various people with whom Prof. Brink had worked were invited to express an opinion in their personal capacity on his contribution. The authenticity of these contributions was also respected in order to allow the writers to air their views without any editorial selection filters. Only two contributions were shortened, and Afrikaans contributions were translated into English. The translated pieces have been specifically indicated as such.

The often controversial nature of this term of office, focused very often on the person of Prof. Brink himself, is covered in Prof. Lizette Rabe's contributions. She conducted the very first interview with



Prof. Brink shortly after his appointment as seventh Vice-Chancellor and Rector. This was done by e-mail – she was in Stellenbosch and he was in Wollongong, where he was Vice-Rector. The article appeared in the Afrikaans monthly journal *Insig* (July 2001). For the sake of continuity she was also invited to conduct a final interview with Prof. Brink. In both these interviews the responses are “for the record” and they are presented as such. Prof. Rabe’s essay links these two events – Brink’s appointment in 2001 and his departure in 2007. In the spirit of keeping a record, a contribution by Tobeia Brink has also been included. It provides an insider’s perspective on her family’s experiences at Stellenbosch.

Prof. Brink’s involvement in the Stellenbosch community also differed from that of his predecessors. He actively strove to promote an inclusive community and worked towards achieving closer cooperation between the University and the Stellenbosch Town Council. Apart from the obvious advantages of such a partnership, the spirit in which Prof. Brink undertook this initiative was one of reconciliation in a community with a divided and often painful past, during which the privileging of whites shifted other race groups to the margins.

I met Prof. Brink only twice during his term of office. The first meeting was related to a painting of his daughter Carmen by Marjorie Wallace. The second was my invitation to him to participate in the documentary programme *Afrikaans: Taal van konflik, hartstaal* (SABC TV 2, September 2006), which I produced. I learned about the controversies at Stellenbosch, especially around the Bram Fisher award and the language debates, only through the media.

Chris Brink was thus not a person I knew. The perceptions and reports in the media also evoked in me an image of him that made me, probably like most other people, wonder about his intentions at Stellenbosch.

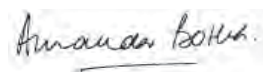
It was therefore a real discovery for me to find, during the research for the television documentary, that the source documents (on the University’s website) conveyed a different image of him than the one that could be derived from the media reports and letters to the press. Many of those perceptions did not correspond with the content of these key speeches. What could be deduced from the key speeches was the consistency of Brink’s vision and the profundity of his arguments to arrive at particular conclusions. These were far removed from the malicious gossip and perceptions – even in the Afrikaans media – that had (unfairly) been concocted about him.

Working through the electronic and other correspondence received by the Rector’s office over the past five years was also revealing. A completely different picture of him emerged from this. But it is practically impossible to give an indication of the scope and extent of this correspondence within the limitations of a book such as this.

In addition to the written contributions included here to convey an image of Chris Brink, it was decided also to strike a more personal note. A number of interviews were conducted with staff members and students – people whose voices would otherwise not be heard in a publication such as this – to communicate an image of Chris Brink, the person.

I acknowledge with appreciation the professional dedication of the editorial board that made possible the appearance of this publication within an extremely limited time: Justa Niemand and her team at AFRICAN SUN MeDIA deserve special mention; special thanks too for the support of the University's Communication and Marketing division, especially Johanna van Niekerk (the Rector's PA).

I hope this publication will express, with appreciation, what Chris Brink managed to do during his short time at Stellenbosch.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Botha". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

*Amanda Botha,*  
Compiler  
Cape Town, May 2007

## NOTE FROM COUNCIL

As the compiler of this book mentions in her introduction, this publication is a commemorative volume dealing with Prof. Chris Brink's term of office as Vice-Chancellor and Rector of the University of Stellenbosch from 1 January 2002 to 21 January 2007. The opinions expressed here must be regarded as the personal views of the respective writers and do not necessarily represent the views or official position of the Council or Management of the University.

*Dr Edwin de la H Hertzog,*  
Chair: Council Stellenbosch University,  
Stellenbosch, May 2007

## SHORT CURRICULUM VITAE: CHRIS BRINK

Professor Chris Brink served as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch from January 2002 to January 2007, in which capacity he was the academic and managerial Head of the University. He was the Chair of Senate and a number of its subcommittees, a member of the Council of the University, and had personal charge of the portfolios of strategic planning and transformation. He was reappointed for a second term of office in 2005, but left Stellenbosch in 2007 to take up the Vice-Chancellorship of the University of Newcastle in England.

Before taking up his position at Stellenbosch, Professor Brink served as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Wollongong in Australia. While at UoW, he restructured the University's activities in research, innovation and commercialisation. Besides his University commitments, he served as a board member of several organisations, including a company in high-performance computing (at the Australian Technology Park in Sydney), the regional Development Board, and the interim Board of the national Cooperative Research Centre for Smart Internet Technology.

Before going to Australia, Chris Brink served as Professor and Head of the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics at the University of Cape Town. After the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 he was involved in the restructuring of UCT, and served as Coordinator of Strategic Planning. Other positions include a Senior Research Fellowship at the Australian National University in the 1980s, a brief spell in industry in the USA, sabbatical and other leave periods at Oxford University, and intermittent visits to many other European universities.

He is a logician with a Cambridge PhD, an interdisciplinary DPhil, Master's degrees in philosophy and mathematics, and a Bachelor's degree in computer science. His research areas include mathematics, logic, philosophy and computer science, and he has published in all these fields. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa, a former President of the South African Mathematical Society and a Founder Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa. Before moving into management he held the prestigious "A"-rating of the National Research Foundation, which ranked him as one of South Africa's leading scientists. He is known for his interdisciplinary work, and has an international profile in research leadership. He has extensive experience in research, teaching and university administration, and has served in review panels or in an advisory capacity to a number of universities internationally.

At Stellenbosch Professor Brink led a transformation agenda which attracted national and international attention. Shortly after taking up his position in 2002 he reorganised the Senior Executive, making it smaller and more diverse. By the end of 2003 the University had carried out a number of major planning initiatives, including a Research Management Plan, a Teaching Management Plan, a Diversity Plan, and a Language Plan. All of these fit under a concise 5-point Vision Statement (Vision 2012). This was followed in 2004 by a comprehensive Business Plan for the University. Implementation of the Business Plan was tracked by a number of measurable performance indicators arising from Vision 2012. By 2006, Professor Brink was able to report that, on eight of the standard performance indicators for

measuring academic quality, Stellenbosch was one of the top three universities nationally – and on four of these criteria Stellenbosch was first in the country.

Professor Brink served as Chair of the Advisory Board of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, a Trustee of the South African Centre for Epidemiological Modelling and Analysis, and the Honorary Colonel of the Military Academy of South Africa. At local level he teamed up with the Executive Mayor in an initiative called "Reinventing Stellenbosch", with a regional development agenda.

Chris Brink was born and grew up in Upington, in the Northern Cape. He is married to Tobeia Brink, and they have three children: Carmen (22), Hestia (8) and Peter (6).

## STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY VISION STATEMENT 2012

With this vision statement Stellenbosch University commits itself to an outward-oriented role within South Africa, in Africa, and globally.

Stellenbosch University:

- Is an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner
- Contributes towards building the scientific, technological and intellectual capacity of Africa
- Is an active role player in the development of the South African society
- Has a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas
- Promotes Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context

## UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH TOEKOMSVISIE 2012

Met hierdie toekomsvisie verbind die Universiteit Stellenbosch hom tot 'n uitwaartse rol binne Suid-Afrika, Afrika en globaal.

Die Universiteit Stellenbosch:

- Is 'n uitnemende akademiese instelling en gerespekteerde kennisvennoot
- Bou aan die wetenskaplike, tegnologiese en intellektuele kapasiteit van Afrika
- Is 'n aktiewe rolspeler in die ontwikkeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing
- Het 'n kampuskultuur wat 'n diversiteit van mense en idees verwelkom
- Bevorder Afrikaans as onderrig- en wetenskapstaal in 'n meertalige konteks

## IYUNIVESITHI YASESTELLENBOSCH UMBONO 2012

Ngalo mbono iYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch iyazibophelela ngokunokwayo ekubambeni indima ephumele elubala kuMzantsi Afrika, e-Afrika naselizweni jikelele.

IYunivesithi yaseStellenbosch:

- Liziko lezemfundo eliphume izandla kunye neliliqabane elihlonitshwayo kwezolwazi
- Ithi ifake igxalaba ekwakheni nasekukhuliseni izikhundla zobunzululwazi, ubugcisa nobungqondi e-Afrika
- Iyinxalenye yabathathi-nxaxheba abanendima abayithathayo ekuphuhliseni uluntu loMzantsi Afrika
- Inekhampasi enenkubeko eyamkela zonke iintlobo zabantu kunye nezimvo zabo
- Iphakamisa umgangatho wolwimi lwesi-Afrikansi njengolwimi ekuhlolwa ngalo noluno-kusetyenziswa kwezobunzululwazi kwimeko apho kusetyenziswa iilwimi ngeelwimi



## *PART I*

*Five years of  
transformation*





## TRANSFORMATION AS DEMYTHOLOGISATION

To me the issue of transformation, and the energy that went into the transformation process, are the defining features of my time as Rector and Vice-Chancellor at Stellenbosch University from 2002 to 2007.

"Transformation", at that time, must have been one of the most-used but least-defined words in higher education in South Africa, meaning different things to different people in different environments. For some, transformation meant nothing more or less than "affirmative action", the blunt end of which translated into "more black students and staff". To others, transformation meant "Africanisation", which typically had to do with a radical redesign of the curriculum. At macro level there is the notion of transformation of the higher education sector, away from the apartheid landscape of "historically white" and "historically black" universities – as was in fact implemented in the great mergers and amalgamations exercise of 2003. And at micro level, within universities, there are any number of further interpretations and nuances. When all of these ideas and ideals are bundled together under the collective name of "transformation", the main effect is often simply to cast aspersions on the idea of change, since anybody can find something in it to dislike.

At Stellenbosch we established a simple operational notion of transformation and stuck to it fairly consistently. The idea was that the transformation of the University amounted to the process of realising the goals set out in our Strategic Planning Framework. This document had its origins in the late 1990s, when the academics felt the need to redefine the image of the University, and to make a concerted effort to become a national asset in the new South Africa. This wave of thinking culminated in the document titled "A Strategic Planning Framework for the new century and beyond", dated April 2000, which remained during my time at Stellenbosch the definitive formulation of what we were trying to achieve. The Strategic Planning Framework, in turn, was summarised during 2003 in a five-point vision statement, known simply as Vision 2012. Each of the five vision points sets out a core idea and a core goal thought to be attainable by 2012: academic excellence, being a role player in the emerging South African society, capacity-building in an African context, increased diversity, and promoting Afrikaans in a multilingual context.

The characterisation of transformation as the realisation of Vision 2012 was important for two reasons. The first is its simplicity. Any student and any academic could understand the five vision points, and make a personal contribution towards their realisation. The second reason was that Vision 2012 was our own formulation of the changes we would like to see at Stellenbosch University. That Stellenbosch wished to transform itself in this particular manner was a free choice of the academics themselves. Transformation, therefore, was not an ideology being forced upon us from outside, or a political imperative in which we had no choice. Transformation was and is the process of working to become a better university. The driving force of transformation at Stellenbosch was our academic ambition – as it ought to be.

As far as my own views were concerned, the matter was quite simple. In the personal vision statement I submitted to Council in 2001, as part of my candidature for the position of Vice-Chancellor, I formulated my goal as follows:

Stellenbosch will lead the development of a knowledge economy for South Africa.

And in my inaugural speech of April 2002 I put it even more succinctly: *We wish to be a top university* in the new world. My personal goal as Vice-Chancellor thus meshed perfectly with the ambitions of the Strategic Planning Framework. With that, the essentials of implementation became quite clear. We needed to do whatever it takes to be a good university, given the parameters of what being a "good university" means in the new millennium. It was clear to me that there was a lot of work to be done to realize this goal, and Vision 2012 was our formulation of what this work would consist of.

The amount of progress we made with transformation between 2002 and 2007 can be judged by the extent to which we realized the goals of Vision 2012. I will report on our progress in this regard in my contribution entitled "The State of the University", in which I also give some facts and figures. Here I would like to do something else, which is to acknowledge that not all change is quantifiable. I do so because I believe that transformation is not a numbers game but a mind game. The numbers game may succeed in measuring consequences, but these consequences arise from the unquantifiable changes in people's minds.

The way to conduct transformation as a mind game is as follows. First try to change the consciousness. Once the consciousness is changing, behaviour starts to change. When behaviour starts to change, exploit the opportunities that arise to change the numbers.

It was clear to me from the outset that transformation at Stellenbosch University would have to be based on a change of consciousness. I was struck by the fact that the Stellenbosch to which I returned in 2002 still resembled in so many ways – and particularly as regards mindset and outlook on life – the Stellenbosch I had left in 1985. It was as though the University had been in a Rip van Winkle sleep while the rest of the country went through the turbulence and excitement of the coming of democracy.

The Strategic Planning Framework had been a dream within that long sleep. To turn the dream into reality it would not have sufficed just to optimize our strategies within the current mindset. It was the mindset itself which had to be identified and addressed. To make academic progress, we would have to penetrate to the core of what Stellenbosch could be – the potential, rather the self-constructed paradigm. We would have to consider the deeply rooted ideas and stereotypes which Afrikaners, Afrikaans speakers and South Africans (in that order) had of Stellenbosch, and work on changing them. I call these deeply rooted ideas and stereotypes the myths of Stellenbosch.

A myth is not necessarily a lie, but neither is it the literal truth. It usually represents a set of unconscious assumptions, and often responds to a collective need. The mind game of transformation at Stellenbosch, therefore, would have to consist of identifying these myths, and holding them up to the light of day. At the same time, we would have to pay attention to the accompanying metaphors and cultural phenomena expressing those myths, knowing that they are as invisible from inside the Stellenbosch frame of reference as they are obvious from the outside.

Perhaps the most deeply rooted myth of all is the myth of paradise. Stellenbosch, the town and the environment, is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and that beauty became a metaphor for perfection. For a long time Afrikaners could find in Stellenbosch a small exclusive paradise, shielded against the turmoil engulfing the rest of the country. Generations of Afrikaners treasure the memories of their student days at Stellenbosch as the most carefree and idyllic time of their lives. Understandably, therefore, in the robust new South Africa, many yearn for Stellenbosch to remain unchanged, as an iconic reminder of the way life once was. I first publicly addressed the myth of paradise in my Inaugural Address of April 2002:

Stellenbosch is unique – so people tell me. That, in fact, is the single most common phrase I have heard since taking up my position as Vice Chancellor 100 days ago: “Stellenbosch is unique”. In Stellenbosch, people say, things are well-ordered. Of good quality. Everything works. Everything is in its appointed place. Everything is beautiful.

But in that, itself, lies the danger. The danger is that we will slip into a comfortable metaphor of Stellenbosch as a small secluded paradise, behind the mountain range of our implicit assumptions, distant from the new world around us. The danger is that we will think of ourselves as the gatekeepers of paradise. The danger is that we will only open the gates, every now and then, ever so slightly, to let a few people in, on the assumption that they should then again close the gate behind them.

A number of problems arise from the myth of paradise. First among these is the problem of complacency. Paradise is, after all, the perfect abode of the elect – improvement is impossible, and so change can only be for the worse.

Secondly, there is the problem that so many people were excluded from paradise for so long, and went through a kind of hell which the chosen few carefully remained oblivious of. For every Matie alumnus treasuring memories of Stellenbosch, there must be dozens of people retaining the image of Stellenbosch as an inaccessible circle of unfair advantage. These people take no particular pleasure in having the image of paradise projected before them.

Thirdly, there is the problem of sustainability. If the University does not change, but the rest of the world does, then the University will simply be left behind. I am reminded of the comment of the award-winning young Afrikaans writer, Jackie Nagtegaal, who registered as a student at Stellenbosch a few years ago, only to leave again after a couple of weeks, with the comment: “If this is paradise, it is a fool's paradise.”

We had to start changing the consciousness – the idea that only the chosen will be admitted to paradise. One new initiative which helped to make a difference in this regard was the creation of a new award, the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds. This was a large cash award (initially about double a normal full-cost bursary) to selected students who had succeeded in rising above difficult circumstances. The thought behind the award was that “merit” is not an absolute parameter, but should be considered relative to circumstances. At the first award ceremony I explained the matter as follows:

In line with our Vision Statement, Stellenbosch University strives to be an academic institution of excellence, with a national profile and an international reputation. Quality must be our

benchmark. If so, we have to ask a simple but profound question: how do you judge quality relative to context? Some of us take for granted an environment, which for others is only a dream. If so, is it not the case that our performance, no matter how well merited on the basis of our own efforts, also owes something to the environment within which we live and work?

Consider two hypothetical cases. One is a student whose parents are well-educated professional people, reasonably affluent, and who comes to us from one of the so-called "good schools", where she enjoyed every possible facility for sharpening the mind. The other is a student whose parents have had little formal education and who live in poverty, who comes to us from a historically disadvantaged school in a gang-infested area. If the former student comes to Stellenbosch with a school-leaving mark of 90%, and the latter comes with a school-leaving mark of 70%, is it possible for us to say that the former is a better student than the latter? And if we do, would that be right?

Consider for example the case of Ms Ella Davids – not her real name, but a true story. She grew up in a deprived area of the platteland, went to a small rural school, and matriculated there in 1991 with results which at Stellenbosch would be regarded as fairly mediocre, under circumstances which she describes as "frustrating". "My childhood dreams and aspirations faded away, and I swore never again to read a book or learn something." After leaving school she worked for a number of years as a fruit packer, in a grocery store, and as a childminder. Gradually, however, the dream of further study was rekindled, in part through her involvement with an organisation called Youth with a Mission. In January 2002 she plucked up the courage to make an appointment with the local dominee. The dominee called a friend of his at Stellenbosch, and a remarkable chain reaction of events was set in motion.

Two weeks later Ella arrived at Stellenbosch with R200 in her pocket, "and a word from the Lord". She was 28 years old. She enrolled for a degree in theology, found accommodation in a back yard in Cloetessville, the Coloured township outside Stellenbosch, and walked to the campus every day. By the end of that academic year she had completed thirteen semester courses, nine of them with distinction, including Greek I with a final result of 98%. In her second year her results were not quite as good, since she had to take a job to pay for her studies – she handled four tutorial assistantships simultaneously. None the less, she once again passed most of her subjects with distinction, including Greek II with 94%. The Vice-Chancellors's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds, which Ella won at the end of her second year, enabled her to realise her potential without the pressures of financial hardship. She later completed her master's degree with distinction and is currently working on her doctoral thesis.

There are many similar stories. There is the black student who grew up in a corrugated iron shack in Khayalitsha in the troubled 1980s, wrote matric under police supervision, stole train rides to get to the University of the Western Cape, and has now completed a PhD in Physics at Stellenbosch. There is the spastic quadriplegic who is on her way to Oxford. There is the young woman from a small town who lost her handicapped father after finishing school, and found herself at age 20 the head of a household with a handicapped mother and a handicapped sister, who none the less came to Stellenbosch and completed her degree with distinction. They are the real role models, and they are an example to those from the "good schools" who take entry into paradise for granted. Starting in 2003, we not only made three Vice-

Chancellor's Awards every year, but we also went to great lengths to create a high profile for the award winners amongst their fellow students. For that purpose we use the annual academic opening of the university to announce the new award winners, in a ceremony consciously modelled on the awarding of Honorary Doctorates. It is truly a consciousness-changing moment.

It gave me great pleasure during my time at Stellenbosch to experience at first hand the changing consciousness amongst the students regarding the presence on campus of Black/Coloured/Indian students by going to the Neelsie (the student centre) every day to buy my daily sandwich. Five years ago it was painfully evident that white students and black students chose to sit apart. There was even a name for the area left of the staircase as you went down to the basement area of the Neelsie, where the black students used to congregate: "District Six". Today that kind of self-imposed apartheid is something of the past. Black and white and all shades of colour mix freely in the Neelsie, just as they walk casually and self-confidently together down Victoria Street, the main thoroughfare of the University.

The Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds also brings to light another myth, which overlaps with the paradise myth but has a more academic slant. This is the myth of excellence. One of my first and strongest memories of Stellenbosch is of the senior academic who mentioned to me in passing, clearly as just a piece of factual information, that "Stellenbosch has the best students in the world". How, I wondered, does he know that? On what grounds can someone who has never studied or worked at any other university anywhere else make a claim of that magnitude? The answer, I later realized, is that his statement was not an empirical observation but an article of faith. His belief – his unexamined assumption – was that Stellenbosch was one of the best universities in the world.

This self-perception of Stellenbosch as a place of excellence has been around for a long time. In the *Gedenkboek van het Victoria Kollege* ("Memorial Volume of Victoria College"), published in 1918 at the time of transition from the former Victoria College to the newly-established University of Stellenbosch, you can already find Stellenbosch being presented as the "Athens" of the south. The seductiveness of this image is clear from the fact that it still crops up a hundred years later – as I found during one student Carnival when one of our residences was all set to hit the streets with the theme of Stellenbosch as the "white Athens of the south".

It is easy to understand the analogy. Think of the Athens of Pericles and Socrates as a small city exercising political and intellectual influence way out of proportion to its size – and then think of a Stellenbosch modelling itself on that image. Think of the groves of academia, and then substitute vineyards for olive groves. Think of the leisurely intellectual discourse of philosophers, and replace it with the Stellenbosch notion of the *oop gesprek*<sup>1</sup> in imitation of the Socratic dialogue. Think of Greek becoming a language with all the "higher functions" of poetry, philosophy, mathematics and science – then think of the development of Afrikaans. Think of athletes competing for the laurel wreath, then think of Coetzenburg, athletics, and rugby. With all that in mind, however, consider also the fact that the democracy of Athens was built on the back of voiceless slaves – and then think of apartheid. Think of Athens as a military power – then think of military conscription, and students marching in the Stellenbosch Commando in the 1980s.

The main problem with the myth of excellence is that for a large part of the history of Stellenbosch University it was simply not true. The eager acceptance of this myth by the Stellenbosch community was, unfortunately, a better indication of the smallness of their world than the greatness of their university.

At present Stellenbosch University, on objective performance indicators, would rank as one of the top three universities in South Africa, and it stands a realistic chance of becoming the foremost university in the country by 2012. It is important to understand, however, that the current level of performance is the culmination of a long and laborious upward trajectory over roughly the last two decades. If we look further back than that, to the *volksuniversiteit* of former Rector HB Thom in the 1960s and 1970s, we do not see a university of academic excellence. We see a university with the promotion of Afrikaner identity as its main incentive, and with academic matters taking second place to identity politics.

In fairness one should mention that Stellenbosch University, even in the days of the *volksuniversiteit*, has always paid particular attention to teaching. The alumni of Stellenbosch are well known in the professions, and there are many examples of high achievers who had their training here. But the measure of excellence of a university must take into account more than its teaching, or its role in promoting a socio-political ideal. The mission of a university is concerned with knowledge, and the generally accepted basis of comparison between universities is largely concerned with knowledge creation – that is to say, research. In this regard the *volksuniversiteit* hardly distinguished itself. Which, when you think of it, is not surprising, since part of the ethos of a university dedicated in the first place to the wellbeing of the volk is its insularity. An identity-driven university is prone to measuring itself by its own standards, without giving a high priority to measures of comparison with other institutions outside the domain of identity.

Older academics will remember the dismay at Stellenbosch University in 1982 when one of the first comparative studies regarding research in the natural sciences appeared. E.C. Reynhardt, a professor of Physics at UNISA, published a paper in the *South African Journal of Science* comparing the research output of South African universities with those of industrialised countries, and with each other, using the international *Science Citation Index* as source of information.

Reynhardt's paper is of historical interest in a number of ways, but I only mention the conclusions relevant here. "South African university lecturers do a lot less research than their counterparts in industrialised countries", Reynhardt reported. "English-medium universities outshine Afrikaans-medium ones as far as research is concerned." Moreover, of the seven Afrikaans-medium universities which existed at the time (including UNISA and the University of Port Elizabeth) the University of Stellenbosch was bottom of the list in terms of research productivity. At Stellenbosch, for example, according to Reynhardt's calculations, it took 5,9 man-years to produce one internationally recognised research paper in the natural sciences. (At Cape Town, by the same calculation, it took 1,4 man-years; at Wits 1,9; at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education 4,2; and at Pretoria 4,7.)

Using an overarching numerical measure, and normalising the average research output of forty comparable universities in developed countries at a figure of 100, the best-performing South African university (Cape Town) attained a comparative mark of 59. The best-performing Afrikaans university was the University of the Orange Free State, with a mark of 44. Stellenbosch was bottom of the list with a mark of 14.

A similar wake-up call came a few years later when the first national evaluation of individual researchers was carried out by the Foundation for Research Development (now the National Research Foundation). Stellenbosch, contrary to its self-perception as an institution of excellence, had quite mediocre results.

The positive side of these reality checks was that, in terms of research, Stellenbosch academics gradually started pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps. The University can take pride in the way its research profile has improved since the 1990s, especially, and with increased tempo, over the past ten years.

The conclusion to draw is that academic excellence at Stellenbosch University is a goal to be pursued, not a long-standing achievement. That is why the first item of Vision 2012 is the notion of excellence. We are now at the stage where transforming Stellenbosch into a top academic institution is a realistic ambition, attainable in the medium term. But a lot of hard work remains to be done. For example, Stellenbosch still does not feature on the list of the top 500 universities in the world, compiled annually by the Institute for Higher Education of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The academics at Stellenbosch University fully appreciate this point, and the continued academic bootstrapping effort has had a salutary effect on their *esprit de corps*. The irony is that, while the academics are working hard at attaining excellence, the myth of a previous era of excellence now in danger of decay lives on outside the campus.

The third Stellenbosch myth I would like to point out is the myth of power and authority. This is the assumption that the exercise of power and authority is a natural and integral part of the day-to-day functioning of the University. This myth manifests itself in so many ways, and in so many areas, that its very ubiquity makes it almost invisible. Let me none the less mention some examples.

The big Stellenbosch debate at the start of my term of office concerned the practice of initiation of first-year students in our university residences. In 2001, the year before I arrived, a student actually died during an initiation ritual. I took the trouble to make it known at an early stage from a public platform that I regard these initiation rituals as nothing less than structural violence. The debate which followed that pronouncement, and the measures we started taking to combat initiation, gave me a valuable insight, namely that many Stellenbosch alumni shared an implicit assumption that it was entirely natural and necessary for senior students to exercise power and authority over junior students. From that assumption it was easy to reach the conclusion that initiation was bad only in as much as senior students exceeded or abused their authority. My view was entirely different. The core problem with initiation was not that it was a power game gone wrong. The core problem was that it was a power game in the first place. Here was an excellent example of the need for a change of consciousness.

In initiation rituals the myth of paradise and the myth of excellence dovetailed neatly with the myth of power and authority. At one time, for example, the following little ritual used to play itself out in one of our residences whenever (as they had to) a first-year student lit a cigarette for an *oumeneer* ("old Mister"). The first-year had to kneel, and recite the following rhyme while drawing the match:

O thunder stick, o lightning rod  
Only light in darkest Africa  
Emanating from Stellenbosch  
The white Athens of the South.

Trying to change this kind of behaviour by making rules seemed to me entirely futile. The complicated Student Rulebook which had developed over many years was clearly a reactive document in the sense that any new brutality which came to light was followed by a new rule specifically forbidding that partic-

ular practice. Students are infinitely resourceful and could always devise new ways of keeping old ideas alive. What we had to do, instead, was to change the consciousness, to enable a change in behaviour.

It was at this stage that we started distinguishing between a rule-driven and a value-driven approach, and opted decisively for the latter. The new approach was to inculcate amongst the residences just three simple values:

- No compulsion
- No secrecy
- No infringement of human dignity.

Gradually the ethos of initiation started fading out of the system, and "welcoming ceremony" became less of a euphemism and more of a reality. This progress was made possible because we had the active collaboration of some excellent student leaders, and because we were addressing, not the symptoms of the initiation ethos, but the disease itself, which was the myth of power and authority. Evidently there was an unfulfilled need for some kind of bonding experience. If we were to ignore that need, we would simply have driven the undesirable practices arising from that need underground. With the value-driven approach it was possible to design and implement bonding activities with a much more positive slant. It was a particularly satisfying moment of my Vice-Chancellorship when two of our residences designed their entire welcoming week for first-year students around the group activity of building houses in Kayamandi (the black township outside Stellenbosch).

The myth of power and authority was also evident in terms of management practices. At first I was just astounded at the low level of decision-making the Vice-Chancellor was expected to deal with. (One of the first decisions landing on my desk was to approve a menu.) However, it soon became clear to me that this was a cultural phenomenon. The Vice-Chancellor's office was clearly seen as a kind of command and control centre, and the Vice-Chancellor himself as an archetypal strict-but-fair patriarchal figure, who personally took all the decisions. That seemed to me a bad idea. Certainly there is a place for command and control, but as any professor can tell you it is not the best way of dealing with academics. If you wish your university to improve its academic performance, and particularly if you wish to promote academic entrepreneurship, you should leave the academics free to take their own decisions.

In this regard I would like to give credit to the University Senate. Of course I cannot comment on how Senate functioned before 2002, but in my five years as Chair, Senate increasingly took on the role it is supposed to have, namely that of academic watchdog and decision-maker. One of the first small but significant changes at Senate meetings was the creation of a standing item on the agenda called "Members' Items". This gave any member of Senate the right to put any item of academic importance on the agenda for debate and decision – a prerogative which members of Senate increasingly started making use of.

It is, however, in the public arena that the myth of power and authority most clearly and frequently manifested itself. This is true in particular of the language debate. When a debate flared up in the Afrikaans press around the so-called "T-option"<sup>2</sup>, it was at first reported that lecturers had been "ordered" to offer part of their courses in English. The fact of the matter was exactly the opposite: the decision to use the T-option came from the academics themselves, in the normal course of events. But the myth that decision-making is nothing but the outcome of an exercise of power is a stubborn and pervasive one. It



manifested repeatedly, for example, in the absolute conviction that Stellenbosch University is subject to continuous and relentless "pressure from the government", directed in particular against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. Many people must have had a mental image of the Minister of Education (or the President?) ringing up the Vice-Chancellor every now and again with instructions on what to do or not to do. For all I know that may well be what had happened in the past, but in my time at Stellenbosch a Minister rang me up only once, and then he happened to have the wrong university. I have to say that as a university manager I felt less pressure from government in South Africa than I did in Australia, and also less than I expect to experience in the United Kingdom.

The myth of constant government pressure is probably sustained by the conviction that the University is totally dependent financially on its government subsidy, and that subsidy is used as a lever to bend universities to the will of the state. The reality is that over the past decade or so the state, in terms of the university budget, the government has gradually become a minority shareholder. Of the overall budget of Stellenbosch University for 2006, the government subsidy only amounted to about one third of the total, and the determination of the subsidy amount is largely formula-driven, not discretionary. Moreover, the part of the subsidy allocation which the government could use to exert pressure in favour of some agenda such as affirmative action only amounts to 6% of the total so-called block grant. There is no mechanism within the subsidy formula to exert direct pressure on a university with regard to its language policy.

It is interesting to observe the central role of metaphors of power and conflict in the debates concerning Stellenbosch in the Afrikaans press. The same idea echoes like a refrain through many topics: it is time to draw a line in the sand, stiffen our backbones, stand up for our rights. The worst possible insult one Afrikaner can hurl at another is of cowardice, of bending the knee, of having no backbone. No surprise, then, that much of the public criticism of Stellenbosch University in the Afrikaans press in my time was based on accusations of spineless conformity to political correctness. The mere possibility that an academic community can of its own volition identify and critically examine the myths of Stellenbosch, can decide for itself to engage in a transformation agenda, and can do so with no other motive than to build a better university, is one that clearly did not and could not feature within the mindset of these critics. The mere recognition of such a possibility would in itself already have constituted a change of consciousness.

It has always been a feature of transformation at Stellenbosch that most non-Afrikaans speakers were entirely oblivious to the barrage of criticism of the University from the Afrikaans press. The change of consciousness arising from the process of demythologisation was accompanied by a very vocal outpouring of protest against what was happening at Stellenbosch. That was not unexpected. When you rub up against people's mental comfort zones, you are bound to raise their ire. But there is something to be learnt from this as well, since the progression of topics of criticism and debate serve as a barometer of the gradual change of consciousness. If you are criticised at first for being spineless on some particular issue, and then later criticized on the same issue for being dumb, then that is some indication of progress, since the initial supposition that you are incapable of taking your own decisions has been replaced by the new supposition that you took a stupid decision.

In fact, I have found that one measure of success in changing consciousness is when the same people who at first bitterly opposed a particular change later start selling the idea as their own. For example, at present (in 2007) you will have difficulty finding in Stellenbosch anybody who was ever in favour of initiation in the student residences, and a lot of people who like to bend your ear with stories of how they had always opposed it. Likewise with the simple idea of doing an audit. When we started the process of designing a language policy for the University in 2002, the first thing we did was to carry out a comprehensive survey of just how much Afrikaans was actually present at the University. This radical innovation earned me a number of reprimands and angry letters. "Stellenbosch is Afrikaans, and that's that!", fumed one correspondent in *Die Burger*. Five years later, you can hardly raise the possibility of considering some new idea without being met with the proposal that the first thing to do would be to "get the data" through some opinion poll or survey.

An entire thesis could be written on the gradual demythologisation of Stellenbosch and the very public contestation of that process in the Afrikaans press. Often a particular myth would be highlighted by the adverse reaction following some action that went against it. Consider, for example, the reaction following the announcement in 2004 of the award of an Honorary Doctorate, posthumously, to Bram Fischer. The proposal for such an award was made in the usual way, at the usual committee, and in the usual annual schedule for dealing with such proposals. It was considered and approved by a majority vote in the usual way. Afterwards it went, along with the other proposals for Honorary Doctorates, to Senate, who in turn recommended the award to Council after the usual vote had been taken. And Council approved the award without batting an eyelid. Once the announcement was made, however, a fierce polemic erupted in the Afrikaans press. Evidently this award was, for much of the old guard of Stellenbosch, simply a step too far. That opinions may differ about the merits of such an award – or the merits of the awardee – is not so strange, and in so far as it forced or enticed Afrikaners to reconsider the past probably even a good thing. But much of the so-called "Fischer debate" was no debate at all. It was an outpouring of anger and venom along the lines of "How dare they!"

Why would that be? Because the decision to make this particular award ran contrary to another deeply entrenched myth, which is that ownership of the University belongs to a certain community of Afrikaners and alumni, rather than to the academics on campus. As the President of the Alumni Organization of one of our oldest male residences explained to me, not unkindly: "You have to remember, Professor, that this is *our* place." The myth of ownership subsequently became the topic of my address to Convocation in November 2004, titled "Whose place is this?".

Some would say that there have been many different Stellenbosch debates over the past few years, such as the initiation debate, the "white males" debate, the Fischer debate, and of course the language debate. However, I believe that in reality there has only ever been one debate, and that is the transformation debate. Even the language debate falls under the heading of transformation. Consideration of the place and role of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch is part of our soul-searching about how we should reinvent ourselves as an academic institution. Deciding about language policy is part of academic decision-making, not the other way round. None the less, the issue of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch is a profound one, which deserves to be dealt with as a topic on its own. I do so in the chapter titled "What is an Afrikaans university?"

When I look back now over our progress with transformation as demythologisation at Stellenbosch over the past five years, it seems clear to me that the academic consciousness on campus changed a great deal quicker than the public consciousness of the traditional Matie community off-campus. On the campus the process of change has started to move beyond a change of consciousness to a change of behaviour, even to the extent that a change in the numbers is becoming noticeable.

Off campus, however, there are many areas where the process of demythologisation has only just started. In fact, in some cases cultural assumptions from pre-democracy days are beginning to reappear, after having carefully been kept under wraps since 1994. Think for example of the deeply rooted yearning for the appearance of The Leader, and the belief that just beyond the boundaries you have drawn there lies The Enemy. Think also of the earnest desire for guarantees and certainties. But myths can also take on new manifestations, and part of the way forward will have to be to watch out for these. The myth of paradise, for example, could easily be transmuted from the image of Stellenbosch as an Afrikaner paradise to the image of Stellenbosch as an Afrikaans paradise. That, in my view, would not be progress. The idea of Stellenbosch as a paradise reserved for some particular ethnic or cultural group remains a dangerous myth, no matter how that group is defined.

My time as Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University was the most interesting period of my life. I learnt a lot, for which I am grateful. I did my best to carry out the task for which I came, and I enjoyed doing so. I am impressed with the manner in which students, academics and support staff are committed to the challenge of transforming the University into a top academic institution, and I am more than satisfied that we have made significant progress on the road to realising Vision 2012. The trials and tribulations that came with transformation and demythologisation I accept as part of the job. To me they count for little against the realisation that Stellenbosch has moved up quite a few rungs on the academic ladder in quite a short time. With good reason we can now begin to say that Stellenbosch leads the development of a knowledge economy for South Africa.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “open conversation”.

<sup>2</sup> The “T” is for “tweetaligheid”, which means bilingualism. The idea was that lecturers offering teaching modules in the T-option had the licence to use English in a variety of ways to accommodate non-Afrikaans speaking students.





## WHAT IS AN AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY?

Of all the many questions and issues arising from the *taaldebat* (language debate) at Stellenbosch perhaps the most important question is exactly the one which has been posed least of all. When we claim so easily that Stellenbosch is an Afrikaans university, or ought to be, what do we mean by that? What is an Afrikaans university?

To enquire after the nature of something is always a difficult question to answer, since an essentialist description of anything is bound to overlook some aspects of it. None the less, amongst the many views of what an Afrikaans university is, or ought to be, there are two which we may fruitfully compare and contrast.

One view of an Afrikaans university is that it is in the first place a *university*, and that whatever may be done or decided concerning Afrikaans will take place in the context of what is advantageous to the academic profile of the university. Let us call this the academic model of an Afrikaans university. Under the academic model, the promotion of Afrikaans is a strategic goal of the university – but not the only goal, nor the most important one. In the decision-making processes of the university, under the academic model, the goal of promoting Afrikaans is in somewhat the same position as the goal of community interaction: it is an integral part of decision-making, but not a dominant influence. The academic model allows for policy, procedures and structures to promote Afrikaans, in the same way as for other strategic goals.

The other view of an Afrikaans university is that it is in the first place *Afrikaans*, and that whatever may be done or decided regarding academic matters will take place in the context of what is advantageous for the promotion of Afrikaans. On this view, the first and most important task of the university is to serve as an instrument for the protection and retention of Afrikaans. Over the past few years this view has manifested itself in a particular form, namely that the academic business of the university should be a consequence of the identity of the people who work and study there. The idea is that the university should act as gatekeeper to ensure that only Afrikaans speakers are admitted as students and staff. Those Afrikaans academics who choose to congregate in this way would then determine the academic direction of the university, according to whatever competencies they happen to have. Entry to the university, therefore, would not in the first place be a matter of responding to the question "what do you do?". Entry to the university would be a matter of giving the right answer to the question "what is your identity?" We may call this the identity model of an Afrikaans university.

At Stellenbosch, the core question is not whether we wish to be an Afrikaans university, but what kind of Afrikaans university we wish to be. Should we think of Afrikaans as a strategic goal, and pursue the promotion of Afrikaans in the context of our academic decision-making? Or should we think of Afrikaans as a state of being, and pursue our academic decision-making in the context of our Afrikaans-ness? Should Stellenbosch adopt the academic model of an Afrikaans university, or the identity model?

Inside the University the answer is easy. Since the turn of the century, Stellenbosch University, through its normal collegial decision-making processes, has consistently adopted the view that the promotion of Afrikaans is a strategic goal. This can be seen in the Mission Statement and Strategic Planning Framework of 2000, the formulation of Vision 2012, the rolling Business Plan, and the language policy of the University. All these documents enunciate a strong commitment to Afrikaans, without positioning Afrikaans as the dominant factor at the University. In fact, neither the words "Afrikaans university" nor any imputation that Stellenbosch is in essence an Afrikaans university appear in any one of these documents. The spirit of our strategic documents is not that Afrikaans is the all-encompassing state of the University, but that it is one of our defining characteristics, and that it is a feature we would like to retain and promote.

Thus the institutional documents of Stellenbosch University treat the promotion of Afrikaans in the same way and at the same level as the promotion of other strategic goals, like academic excellence, scholarship, diversity, community interaction, equity and so forth. This egalitarian treatment of Afrikaans as a strategic goal reflects the fact that within the University, and particularly within Senate, a sufficient measure of consensus has gradually evolved regarding Afrikaans.

This evolutionary process included thorough and sometimes robust debate within the normal forums of the University, so it has not simply been a matter of *laissez-faire*. Nor should one conclude that the matter is over and done with. At practically every matter coming up for decision the issue of Afrikaans reappears, and is reconsidered. In 2006, for example, apropos of the conceptual framework for revising the language policy, and at the request of the Task Team concerned, Senate had it minuted that "... that Senate reconfirms the decisions of 2005 concerning the application of the language policy".<sup>1</sup> One may conclude that the academics are not shirking their responsibility of applying their mind to issues of language.

It could be argued – and it often is – that the University does not pay enough attention to the promotion of Afrikaans as a strategic goal, or that it is not being done effectively, or that not enough resources are being made available for this purpose. And there would be some truth in these arguments, just as there would be some truth in the same complaints regarding other strategic goals. Universities move very slowly. For example, our policy documents (including the Strategic Framework) have been extolling the value of community interaction as the third core function of the University for a long time. Yet it was only two years ago that we finally established the required policies and structures within the University to pursue this particular strategic goal. The simple reality is that you cannot always do better at everything all the time.

What is beyond dispute, however, because the institutional documents are so clear on this matter, is that Stellenbosch University as an autonomous academic body has already opted for the academic model of an Afrikaans university. This decision did not come about in ignorance of the identity model. On the contrary. The core idea of the identity model is that it should be a condition of entry into Stellenbosch University for all students and staff that they should either already be competent in Afrikaans, or should undertake to become competent in Afrikaans within reasonable time.<sup>2</sup> This was an explicit proposal of Convocation in 2006. Senate had a thorough debate regarding this proposal, took a vote on the matter, and rejected the proposal with an overwhelming majority.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, with the normal collegial processes of academic decision-making having taken their course, one might have expected that the language debate regarding Afrikaans at Stellenbosch would gradually peter out, in recognition of the fact that the University can and should take its own academic decisions.

But that is exactly what did not happen. And it is not difficult to see why. Behind the question of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch there is an even more fundamental question, namely who has the right to decide about the role of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch. Part of the dynamic of the language debate is that the demand for Stellenbosch to function as an identity-driven Afrikaans university largely comes from outside the academic community, and is conducted as an external campaign. It is inherent to the identity model that its proponents believe that the University is not just an academic institution, but also a cultural institution, that it belongs, if not to, then within, a certain cultural community, and that the power of decision-making about the nature and functioning of the University belongs to this community just as much as it belongs to the academics. In this way of thinking, public campaigns and polemics are a natural part of academic decision-making.

The proponents of the academic model take exactly the opposite view. They regard it as self-evident that decisions regarding the functioning of the University should be taken within the University. Many would even have an aversion to public debate concerning academic issues. In consequence, few academics, even from amongst those who take an active part in policy discussions within their Faculty Board or in Senate, would venture into public discussions on the matter of language – especially when these “discussions” become acrimonious, as they tend to do. That explains the one-sidedness of the language debate.

The notion of identity is central to the history of Stellenbosch University, from its founding as an independent university in 1918 (as a kind of counterweight to the “English” University of Cape Town), to the *volksuniversiteit* of Rector HB Thom in the 1960s, and well beyond. Over the past decade or so, however, the University has increasingly been leaving identity issues behind. (Thus, for example, Stellenbosch in no way tries to position itself as a “Christian” university, or a “Western Cape” university.) Any demand that Stellenbosch should position itself as an Afrikaans university along the lines of the identity model would at this stage amount to reversing direction. It would represent a return to the idea, as in the *volksuniversiteit*, of identity as a driver of academic decision-making.

At present, on almost any of the performance indicators of academic excellence, Stellenbosch would count amongst the top three universities in the country, and on a number of these measures it would be first. Two comments should be made regarding this happy circumstance.

The first is that the current profile of excellence of the University is a hard-won achievement of the past decade or so, for which the academics of Stellenbosch should get the credit. In my contribution titled “Transformation as demythologization” I have already pointed out the myth that Stellenbosch has always been a top university. The *volksuniversiteit* was a parochial teaching-based community college with little research activity of any significance. The rather flattering self-image of the University at that time took shape within a closed community isolating itself from the test of proper comparative evaluation. Academics beyond a certain age will remember the shock to that self-image

when the results came out of the first-ever national evaluation of researchers by the Foundation for Research Development in the 1980s. Since then, however, and increasingly over the past ten years, Stellenbosch University has been pulling itself up by its academic bootstraps, and has shown a consistently rising profile in research output.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, this gradual and increasing improvement in the University's academic profile has been happening at the same time and more or less at the same tempo as the matter of identity became less of a driving force. Academic performance, as measured by objective performance indicators, started to improve as transformation initiatives took effect and diversity increased. As we stepped up efforts to bring about a more inclusive demographic profile, and to turn Stellenbosch University into a national asset rather than a *volksuniversiteit*, predictions that "standards will fall" became a common refrain. However, exactly the opposite proved to be the case. Excellence and transformation, thus far, go hand in hand.

This pattern of development, and the current level of academic performance of the University, is currently under threat by a renewed insistence that Stellenbosch should adopt the identity model of an Afrikaans university.

The logical consequence of the identity model for Stellenbosch University is that it will gradually revert to being a teaching-based community college, with only those niche areas in research for which expertise happens to be available amongst Afrikaans-speaking academics.

In substantiating this claim, one may advance reasons of principle as well as practical circumstances. The identity model must, by definition, regard the academic business of the university as being secondary to the protection of an Afrikaans identity. With that, the nature of the university as an academic institution is placed in jeopardy. In practice, the status of Stellenbosch University as a broad-based research-led university currently amongst the top three in the country would be endangered. It is not possible to sustain such a profile, which requires world-class research expertise, by depending only on the limited pool of Afrikaans speakers.

Pointing out the existence of the few identity-driven universities elsewhere in the world where academic excellence is maintained across a broad front is of little help, except in so far as it highlights circumstances which do not obtain at Stellenbosch. The Åbo Akademi is an excellent university serving the small Swedish minority in Finland – but it has the backup of an independent Swedish-speaking country just across the border. The renowned Catholic University of Leuven has a strong Flemish identity, but Flemish Brabant is not just a linguistic community in Belgium, it is for all practical purposes an independent political entity. The University of Barcelona teaches in Catalan, but Catalan is a Romance language so close to the world language Spanish that it is not difficult for speakers of either language to pick up receptive skills in the other language within a short space of time. It is unlikely that the parallels for an identity-driven Afrikaans university at Stellenbosch will be found in such company. It is much more likely that an identity-driven Stellenbosch University will find its peers amongst small culturally focused institutions dedicated to the language, culture and community life of a particular minority group.



It is important to make the point that there is nothing wrong with and nothing inferior about a teaching-based community college attempting to sustain a linguistic identity. Typically, institutions of this nature work with great care and dedication to serve a particular linguistic and/or cultural community, and they deserve all credit for it. But the choice to do so inevitably excludes some other choices. The question for Stellenbosch is not whether a future as an identity-driven teaching-based community college is illegitimate or inferior. The question is rather: *Is that what we want?*

Undoubtedly there are those who are ready to make the required trade-off. Rather do without research excellence, they would argue, as long as my child can be taught in Afrikaans at Stellenbosch. Fair enough. But then you have to be able to justify such a decision in the full knowledge of what it is you are giving up. You cannot boast about academic excellence across a broad front and insist on the restrictions of identity at the same time. If you wish for the latter, you will have to let go of the former.

The more vigorously and rigorously the identity model of an Afrikaans university is pursued at Stellenbosch, the more the hard-won profile of academic excellence of the University would be jeopardised.

In support of this claim I advance four reasons.

1. The identity model would jeopardise the academic profile of the University because under this model we would have difficulty in recruiting top academics to Stellenbosch, and may lose the top academics we already have. To maintain and improve a broad-based research-led university requires highly specialised world-class academics.

Consider for example the national Centres of Excellence, of which three out of seven are currently based at Stellenbosch. Recruiting researchers for these centres is no trivial matter. Often there are only a handful of people in the country working on the particular topic. From amongst them you have to select those with world-class expertise matching your particular needs – and then persuade them to relocate to a small town with highly inflated real estate prices, without being able to pay a fortune for their services. To expect in addition that such a person would join a university driven in the first place by language issues is, quite simply, to shoot your recruiting strategy in the foot.

The best academics are those for whom their academic interest is the single strongest driver of their career. They do have other interests – often in a rich variety – but usually nothing other than academic excellence in their chosen field will move them from one place to another.

Over the past few years we managed to entice quite a few top academics to join Stellenbosch University, on the promise and reputation of a rapidly-advancing academic profile. They have joined with those top academics already in place to create a vibrant academic atmosphere. Top academics are much in demand, and, like soccer stars, their services can be bought by competitor institutions. If Stellenbosch were to devote too much time and attention to identity issues, more than are warranted in an institution of academic excellence, then top academics will simply lose interest and start walking away – irrespective of their own mother tongue. “I am not prepared to work in a language ghetto”, one of our A-rated researchers (an Afrikaans speaker) recently warned. People like him will not participate in language debates in the public media. They won't write

letters to *Die Burger*. If they do not like what is happening at Stellenbosch, they will over time just quietly pack up and go.

Once we start losing good academics, we will also start losing good students. For research students this is evident, since they go where their supervisors are. But in the long run the same will happen at undergraduate level. Students are acutely aware of the fact that their time at university is an investment in their career, that the value of that investment relates to the academic reputation of the institution, and that the academic reputation of the institution relates to the quality of the academics.

2. The identity model would jeopardise the academic profile of the University because it would place our academic partnerships at risk. Our motto is "Your knowledge partner", which expresses both a reality and a goal. Of the total budget of the University no less than 43% comes neither from state subsidy nor from student fees, but in one way or another from our knowledge partners. That money comes to the University via research contracts, entrepreneurial activities, philanthropy, consultation work, international agreements and a number of other activities, all largely dependent on the image of the university in the wider world, and the free choice exercised by other institutions whether to partner with us or not.

In addition to partnerships formed by individual academics or research groups, the University as a whole is also engaged in various partnerships. Our Faculty of Military Sciences exists as a result of a contract we have with the South African National Defence Force. Our Faculty of Health Sciences largely operates as a partner of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape. Our Faculty of Theology is in partnership with various religious denominations. The Faculty of Agrisciences is a pioneer in terms of partnerships elsewhere in Africa. These relationships, and many other similar ones, are indispensable building blocks of our academic profile.

Such knowledge partnerships in no way exclude the possibility of Stellenbosch University retaining its commitment to Afrikaans. But the fact is that most of our partners engage with us on the clear understanding that the University is in the first instance an academic institution, not that it is in the first place an Afrikaans institution. A rigorous application of the identity model of what an Afrikaans university is will inevitably lead to many such partnerships being scaled down or lost altogether, and consequently to an attenuation of the University's academic profile.<sup>5</sup>

3. The identity model would jeopardise the academic profile of the University because it amounts to an infringement of academic freedom. Academic freedom means that academics have the right, the ability and the opportunity to take academic decisions, free from outside interference. Under the academic model of an Afrikaans university, the role and use of Afrikaans at the University is an academic matter, and therefore it is the academics who should take the decisions in this regard. To argue, as per the identity model, that the decision-making power regarding Afrikaans at Stellenbosch should belong to a "community" of Afrikaans speakers is to encroach on academic freedom by undermining the legitimate role of Senate.<sup>6</sup>

Of course we accept that the University is in a symbiotic relationship with its environment. Our understanding of this point is built into our vision statement of being a role player in society, and in many activities of community interaction. And of course the University should, if for no other reason then from a marketing point of view, keep close tabs on its image in the world around it. But the University must, above all, retain its academic integrity by making up its own mind. As far as language policy goes, this point is clearly articulated in the Higher Education Act, which stipulates that Council cannot adopt a language policy for the University without the agreement of Senate.

It follows that language policy should grow from the bottom up, rather than be imposed from the top down – and definitely not from the outside. It is the academics who, on a daily basis, experience the interaction between language, teaching and research, and it is therefore the academics who should have the final say on how questions of language are to be decided. And that, in fact, is what has been happening. During my time at Stellenbosch, a number of interesting proposals regarding the role and use of Afrikaans emanated from the Faculty Boards, of which some were adopted after debate, and others not. An interesting example is the following motion, which served before the Faculty Board of Engineering on 28 July 2006:

That the language policy of the Faculty of Engineering be changed to one in which all lectures in the first two years of teaching in all programmes be offered in parallel medium (A/E option), and the last two years in English (E option), but with the following arrangements [*which are then listed – CB*] to ensure that Afrikaans-speaking students have no difficulty in following the programme.

The proposal was debated thoroughly at a Faculty Board meeting, after which the matter was put to the vote, with the following result: 16 votes in favour, and 21 against. This illustrates a few points worth noting. First, the proposer of the motion is an eminent (Afrikaans-speaking) academic who had not in any way participated in the public *taaldebat*, either before or after putting the proposal forward. Second, the University management had no part in the proposal or the debate whatsoever, and were in fact only informed by the Dean after the event. Third, the Faculty Board dealt with the proposal without any public fanfare or community interaction, and came to its own conclusion. Fourth, the outcome of the vote shows that the proposal, while not accepted, had substantial support. None the less, there was no particular heat or emotion in the matter, and no hesitation in going along with the result once the vote had been taken. Here we have a paradigmatic example of how academics prefer to deal with issues of language policy.

It is interesting to note that the extension of the so-called T-option to the third year of study in the Faculty of Arts followed exactly the same route – except that this particular proposal was accepted by the Faculty Board, not rejected. After that, however, the T-option acquired, in the public media, the image of a radical innovation foisted upon unsuspecting academics by the University management. This story deserves special mention, because it illustrates the point about the role of public debate under the identity model and the academic model respectively.

The T-option ("T" for *"tweetaligheid"*, meaning "bilingualism") is nothing more or less than a licence for a lecturer to use English in offering a predominantly Afrikaans-medium course. This may happen in a variety of ways: by offering a particular part of the course in English, by responding in English to questions posed in English, by repeating or summarising salient points in English, by conducting certain tutorials in English, and so on. What the T-option is not, and was not meant to be, is an obtuse repetition of every word in two languages. That lecturers use a bilingual approach in teaching is nothing new and nothing strange – they have been accommodating English-speaking students in some such ways for decades. Also, it has long been the custom that students may choose to do their assignments or take their tests and exams in English. The only innovation is that this common practice was given a name.

And the reason why it was given a name was because of demands from Afrikaans activists that English speakers should not be allowed to exercise a "veto" over the use of Afrikaans in the classroom by asking for answers or information to be repeated in English. It is debatable whether the terminology of a "veto" is applicable at all,<sup>7</sup> but clearly this was a fear factor, and therefore something we tried to address in designing the language policy during 2002. What we could not and would not do was to forbid lecturers to use English as and how they thought appropriate, because that would have been an infringement of their academic freedom. After all, one of the cornerstones of academic freedom is the right to decide how to teach. The compromise reached was, not to prohibit the use of English, but to try and regulate it by stipulating that the intention to do so, and the manner in which it would be done, should be announced and approved beforehand.

This arrangement, to allow bilingualism provided notice is served beforehand of doing so, was passed within the University without much comment – or, indeed, interest. Two years after the adoption of this measure, however, it hit the public media like a fire storm. In the second half of 2005 a fierce public campaign was started against the T-option, the trigger for which was the decision of the Arts Faculty Board to extend this method to the third year of study. What this meant is that the cohort of students who were first-years in 2004, and thus second-years in 2005, would continue to receive their teaching modules in the T-option when they became third-years in 2006.

The public outpouring of anger and venom against the T-option which followed this decision can hardly be dignified by calling it a debate, since it was a decidedly one-sided affair. However, in response to the adverse reaction in the Afrikaans press, the academics took up the matter again. The Arts Faculty Board reconsidered the matter, and unanimously decided to stick to their recommendation. Senate had a full and proper debate about it, and decided likewise in favour of the recommendation. Finally, Council reconsidered the recommendation,<sup>8</sup> and approved it. And with that the matter, as far as the academics were concerned, was concluded. Whatever doubts there may have been about the procedural correctness of the original decision (and such doubts were indeed expressed), once the process of reconsideration had been concluded there could be no doubt about the legitimacy of the T-option as an outcome of academic decision-making. But that in no way concluded the public campaign against the T-option. Which illustrates a very important

point, namely that to the proponents of the identity model, the voice of "the community" is – indeed – regarded as a veto over academic decisions.

4. The identity model would jeopardise the academic profile of the University because it would essentially take us back to the *volksuniversiteit* profile of forty years ago, with all the negative consequences arising from that profile for academic life as well as the national and international image of the University. The only difference would be that, instead of a white Afrikaner university, Stellenbosch would, under the identity model, become a white-and-Coloured Afrikaans university – which, because of the inescapable statistics regarding participation rates, means that for the foreseeable future it will be considerably more white than Coloured.

This point must be made very clearly. It would be wonderful if whites and Coloureds could finally put the past behind them, and if Afrikaans were to be the instrument of such a reconciliation so much the better. "Diversity through Afrikaans" is a good idea. But if we seek diversity *only* through Afrikaans, our attempt will be severely limited in scope. If nothing more happens in terms of diversity at Stellenbosch than whites and Coloureds finding each other, then we will end up with a university which differs only marginally from the *volksuniversiteit*. An Afrikaans university constructed on the identity model is, if not racist, then none the less inherently racial. It cannot be argued that a white-and-Coloured Afrikaans university is non-racial, because "non-racial" carries the meaning of "without taking race into consideration", not the meaning of "two races together".

An inherent racialism would impede the idea of Stellenbosch as a national asset. It would do so because a white-and-Coloured university is still identity-driven, even though the boundaries of the identity in question have been marginally extended. It is not possible to be driven by a minority identity and claim at the same time to be an asset to all South Africans.

That does not mean that Afrikaans cannot be used as an instrument of empowerment. It can, and it should. The case of Coloured Afrikaans school leavers from the *platteland* is often cited as an example – and the case is even stronger when it overlaps with the goal of poverty reduction. Targeting this particular community would fall neatly within the overlap area of community interaction and the promotion of Afrikaans.

All of which makes perfect sense, as long as we keep in mind that community interaction and/or poverty reduction (whether aimed at Coloured Afrikaans speakers or not) and the promotion of Afrikaans are consequences of the academic function of the university. They are not causes of the academic function. The same is true for Afrikaans as a means of empowerment. To position the academic function as subordinate to the functions of community interaction – no matter how well-intentioned that may be as part of an empowerment agenda – would be to fail those you are trying to empower, because it would amount to squandering your academic capital.

To understand the effect of implementing the identity model one must understand that the game of identity politics, which is what such an implementation would amount to, is by definition closely related to measures of social exclusion, and that such measures in turn have an

effect on the composition and functionality – and therefore the academic performance – of your university. Implementing the identity model involves the legitimization of measures of social exclusion on the grounds of protecting Afrikaans. Not all of them are as crude as the T-shirt saying "Praat Afrikaans of hou jou bek",<sup>9</sup> but all of them have one message in common to the outsider, which is that "this is our place". That they send out that particular message is something which Stellenbosch old-timers have great difficulty understanding, but which is painfully obvious to newcomers and those previously excluded.

One of the most mortifying experiences I ever had during my five years at Stellenbosch was when a respected Coloured school principal, a man born and bred in Stellenbosch, was trying patiently to explain to a group of senior white members of Convocation what it feels like to be a step-Matie – and received the brusque response that "But then the step-Maties should just pull themselves together!" The current campaign for an identity-driven Stellenbosch may perhaps exhibit the courtesy of avoiding such situations – but then only for Coloured Afrikaans speakers. The arrogance of an assumed ownership would simply undergo a small extension of its boundaries. The core principle of the identity model, namely that it is based on the question "who are you", rather than the question "what do you do", would remain intact.

Now to summarise and conclude.

Heat and emotion notwithstanding, I believe we have made considerable progress towards realism in the taaldebat over the past few years – if in no other respect, then at least in our understanding of what Stellenbosch as an Afrikaans university is not, and should not be. For example, we have already crossed the bridge that an Afrikaans university cannot and should not be an Afrikaner university – a point by no means obvious five years ago. Likewise, there is now broad consensus that, whatever it may mean for Stellenbosch to be an Afrikaans university, it cannot be single-medium Afrikaans.

English is already inextricably interwoven into the functioning of the University. As time goes by, the comfortable myths of Stellenbosch which are often harnessed so easily and thoughtlessly in support of an unqualified and unreflective notion of an Afrikaans university are beginning to crumble in the face of reality, so much so that formerly contentious topics become part of the accepted discourse. Five years ago, for example, the idea of parallel-medium education was top of the list of evils. By contrast, since the 2005 debate regarding the T-option, the idea of using parallel medium has almost taken on the character of a lifeline for Afrikaans.

The developments regarding language at Stellenbosch over the past five years have very little to do with "pressure from government", or attempts at political correctness, or language rights, or an agenda of *verengelsing* ("englishification"). The simple fact is that developments at Stellenbosch over the past five years are part and parcel of a concerted effort to improve the academic profile of the university, and came about through the normal processes of academic decision-making. The *taaldebat* at Stellenbosch is not a contest between pro-Afrikaans and pro-English factions. The fundamental difference of opinion is on another level, namely between those whose point of departure is the academic business of the university, and those whose point of departure is an Afrikaans language identity. Those whose point of departure is the academic profile, as Vision 2012 and the strategic documents of the Univer-

sity require, have no agenda of *verengelsing*, simply because the matter of language is not for them a cause but rather an effect, following as a consequence of academic decision-making.

The academic model of an Afrikaans university leaves more than enough room for the promotion of Afrikaans, just as it leaves room for the promotion of community interaction, equity, diversity and other strategic goals. It leaves room for developing the ideal of Stellenbosch as the university of first choice for all Afrikaans speakers, because they will come in search of excellence, and through their presence help to stabilise the Afrikaans profile of the University. It also leaves room for those who treasure a group identity to promote their identity, without allowing them to dominate those for whom group identity is not important. The academic model of an Afrikaans university leaves room for a higher ambition for Afrikaans than excluding people from a national asset.

The core question is this: Will Stellenbosch university deal with Afrikaans as part of its academic business, or will it deal with academic business as part of its Afrikaans-ness? In deciding such an issue it is good to consider all possible overlaps and compromises between the academic model and the identity model. It is good to work towards an "and-and" approach, rather than an "either-or" approach. But we should keep in mind that an "and-and" approach also has its limitations. You can walk north and east. Or you can walk north and west. But you cannot walk north and south. That is why the core question deserves careful attention.

To the proponents of the identity model, and more particularly to those who give implicit support to such an agenda without critical reflection on what it actually means, one has to say: Be careful what you wish for. Ask yourself what would be better for Afrikaans: to have ownership of a small teaching-based community college, or to have a special place and dispensation in a broad-based research-led university of excellence?

An Afrikaans university of excellence at Stellenbosch is possible, and desirable. But then the manner in which it is Afrikaans must be part of the manner in which it is a university, not the other way round. Otherwise we would betray not only the University, but also Afrikaans.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Motion at the Senate meeting of 2 June 2006, adopted by a vote of 113 in favour, 13 against and 25 abstentions.
- <sup>2</sup> In the *Financial Mail* of February 2006, for example, Prof. Hermann Giliomee, one of the foremost Afrikaans activists, is quoted as saying: "The point is this: are students obliged to learn Afrikaans in order to study here, or not?"
- <sup>3</sup> Senate meeting of 2 June 2006. The proposal regarding compulsory competency in Afrikaans for all students received 5 votes in favour, with 115 votes against. The analogous proposal regarding compulsory competency in Afrikaans for all staff fared even worse, with only 3 votes in favour and 115 against. In both cases there were a number of abstentions: 40 for the first proposal, and 42 for the second.
- <sup>4</sup> The most recent evidence of this rising profile can be found in the report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to Council in June 2006, which provides the necessary data.
- <sup>5</sup> I spelled out a number of likely consequences in a risk analysis for the University Audit Committee, and also in a letter of 29 May 2006 to Senate, in preparation for the debate on the proposals from Convocation mentioned above. The letter appears elsewhere in this volume.
- <sup>6</sup> In my contribution titled "Transformation as demythologisation" I have already pointed out the myth that Stellenbosch University is under sustained "pressure from the government", particularly as regards language. In my experience there is less government pressure on universities in South Africa than there is in Australia, and I expect to have more pressure in the United Kingdom as well. My experience has also been that in respect to issues of language considerably more pressure has been applied by the Afrikaans press and the proponents of the identity model than by the government.
- <sup>7</sup> My own view is that the student has no such power of veto, but that the lecturer does have to exercise a responsibility. This view goes back a long way. Even before I took up my appointment, I said in July 2001 in an interview with the Afrikaans magazine *Insig*: "In a classroom where some students cannot follow an explanation in Afrikaans, and ask for some repetition in English, the lecturer has the responsibility to accommodate the student". In the meeting of Convocation of November 2002 I repeated my view: "There is no such power of veto. ... What one can say, however, is that this hypothetical student, like any other student, is entitled to a reasonable expectation that his or her learning experience will be maximally supported."
- <sup>8</sup> At the Council meeting of December 2005.
- <sup>9</sup> "Speak Afrikaans or shut up".





## THE STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY

A Vice-Chancellor regularly reports on the state of the University. This has always been a pleasant task for me because there has been so much progress to report. Some of my regular progress reports appear unchanged in this book, while the official annual reports of the University also give a good overview of the years 2002-2007. My public annual report delivered in July 2005 was specifically devoted to the subject of transformation and quality, and appears elsewhere in this book. Later in 2005 it was our turn to undergo the comprehensive institutional audit of the national Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), and the Preface I wrote for our Self-Evaluation Report for this occasion appears in this book as well. Other contributions also make regular reference to progress in various fields. In this chapter I attempt – without too much duplication of other material – to provide a factual overview of the state of the University at the end of my term of office in January 2007.

One may start with the definition that appeared in our Self-Evaluation Report of 2005: the University of Stellenbosch is a broad-based medium-sized research-led university. "Broad-based" means that we cover all four of the broad academic fields: the humanities, natural sciences, engineering and medicine. Apart from Stellenbosch, there are only four other universities in South Africa that are "broad-based" in this sense, and they are therefore also our natural counterparts and competitors. "Medium-sized" points to the fact that Stellenbosch is a classic university town, that we wish to retain this character, and that we should therefore not grow excessively in terms of student numbers. And "research-led" means that the other two core functions of the University, namely teaching and community interaction, are geared towards, and managed, in the wake of our research agenda.

For the purposes of this chapter it will be useful to understand how the University operates. Universities are notorious, especially in the business world, for their complicated consultative decision-making processes, and in this respect Stellenbosch is no exception. Nevertheless, since 2002 we have developed a considerably more streamlined decision-making method that is based on an annual cycle of information, planning, monitoring and budgeting. Each year we start with a consultative meeting, known as the Institutional Planning Forum. Each of the ten Faculties, as well as the University as a whole, operates according to a 3-year business plan that is updated every year in the light of the most recent management information and financial circumstances. The Institutional Planning Forum is the place where all these business plans are integrated.

In order to measure progress, we have developed a monitoring system which has already been described as "best practice" in the country. Vision 2012 is translated into a number of measurable performance indicators, and we then plot each faculty's and each department's position on a two-dimensional co-ordinate system, with strategic objectives on one axis and financial performance on the other. This enables one to see at a glance how the various academic areas of the University compare with one another. While such a method is not unusual in the business world, it was something of a breakthrough for a university to start managing its affairs in this way. Before 2003, for example, we had no means of determining whether an academic department was making a profit or running at a loss.

The University is not a business, in the sense that we are not in the first instance driven by the profit motive. Nevertheless, sound business principles and financial management are essential for improving academic performance and the achievement of Vision 2012. Much of our progress in this regard began with what became known as my "wake-up letter" of December 2003. In this letter addressed to all staff I touched on two issues. The short-term issue was that we had just received our annual subsidy allocation from the state and it was R18,5 m less than we had budgeted for – a real decline per full-time equivalent student of almost 3%. The long-term issue was that this allocation confirmed a pattern of declining state subsidy over the preceding eight years. It was time to confront the problem head on, and this was the beginning of the University's over-arching business plan. As I stated in the "wake-up letter":

Our business plan must become the instrument whereby we can make our vision come true, whereby we can structure our University in such way that we can concentrate on our strengths, on those things that we can do well and can use to strengthen our competitive position in the higher education environment.

The business plan was modelled on the principle of "pruning for growth", and the subsequent redesign of our structures and processes left practically no part of the University untouched. What precisely we did, and how it all worked out, is another story, and a continuing one. For present purposes, however, it will suffice to say that three years later, in presenting and finalising our budget for 2007, our Executive Director Finance could report that our Business Plan has placed us on the road to financial sustainability. We had a solid surplus at the end of 2006, and entered 2007 with an increase in the staff remuneration account of 7,5%, while student fees were pegged at 0% real increase. We built up a Strategic Fund amounting annually to more than 2,5% of income from subsidy and student fees. Using the Strategic Fund we were able, for example, to make a large investment in the four faculties working in the Science, Engineering and Technology arena. We were also able to build up a Contingency Fund of about 0,7% of the same income, for unforeseen events. When the Western Cape was affected by power failures in 2006, for example, we had the wherewithal to provide the University with backup power generation at short notice, thus giving us peace of mind knowing that lectures, examinations and laboratories were not at risk.

However, the management of the University is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Our aim is to be a top university, and our map and compass for the way forward are the Strategic Planning Framework and Vision 2012, respectively. At the time of writing this chapter it has been three years since the formulation of our five-point Vision 2012, so it is an opportune time to ask: where are we now?

As far as academic excellence is concerned, the answer is quite clear. Academically, Stellenbosch University is doing better than ever before – not only compared to our own previous performance, but also relative to other universities in the country. In 2006 the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) could report to Council that, according to the most recent figures, Stellenbosch produced more research publications per academic staff member per year than any other university in the country. The average number of research papers per staff member per year was 0,95, comfortably more than the next best figure of 0,83. Even if one focuses only on journals appearing in the international *Science Citation*

*Index*, Stellenbosch is top of the list (joint first with the University of Cape Town) with 0,26 articles per academic staff member per year – again comfortably ahead of the next best figure of 0,21. If one thinks back to the Reynhardt report of 1982, then the turnaround is remarkable.

Similarly, according to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's report, we also deliver more doctoral degrees per academic staff member than any other university in the country – again the result of a steep trajectory of improvement. For the 2000 academic year (in other words, until the April graduation of 2001) Stellenbosch produced 83 doctorates; by 2005 that figure had grown by 50% to 127. No wonder, then, that the report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) could indicate that on the basis of so-called "weighted research outputs" (which compounds a number of research indicators such as publications and theses) Stellenbosch stands head and shoulders above the other universities in the country, with a weighted average per staff member of 2,17, the next highest figure being 1,73.

Other achievements may be listed in specific fields, rather than in terms of University-wide averages. Of the first seven new national Centres of Excellence, three are located at Stellenbosch (one in collaboration with Wits). In the first round of allocations of national Research Chairs, 4 of the 15 came to Stellenbosch. Stellenbosch established the first Institute of Advanced Studies in Africa, modelled on the renowned Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton, and we received a cash award of R22 million from the Wallenberg Foundation in Sweden to erect a building for this purpose. The new National Centre for Theoretical Physics will be accommodated at Stellenbosch. Our Business School has been granted full EQUIS accreditation – one of only 92 such Business Schools worldwide. The first national Oppenheimer grant was made to a Stellenbosch academic. And one could go on.

The same growth pattern can be seen in working towards our aim of being a constructive role player in society. This is a broad category, and many aspects of University activity can be linked to the idea of role playing – which is as it should be. One aspect to which we have devoted particular attention over the past few years, however, is our role in building up and expanding the knowledge economy in South Africa. A good measure of this is the so-called THRIIP ("Technology in Human Resources Programme") grants made by the Department of Science and Technology, where Stellenbosch has performed better on a cumulative basis over the years than any other university in the country. These grants make state funds available for research projects to match the investment committed by partners in business and industry. This is an indirect but reliable indicator that our motto "Your Knowledge Partner" is not simply an empty slogan but a reality.

One of the highlights of my term of office was when Stellenbosch won the national award as "Technologically Most Innovative University" in South Africa in 2005. Part of the restructuring of the University Management in 2002 was precisely to establish Innovation and Commercialisation as a management portfolio – the first university in the country to do so – and it was good to see this strategy bear fruit. In 2005 Stellenbosch also came first in the National Innovation Competition for Students – only to improve on this in 2006 by winning first and second places.

As foreshadowed in our Strategic Planning Framework, the traditional portfolio of "community service" or "outreach" also underwent a fundamental conceptual change, being reinvented as "community *interaction*". While the former has something of the flavour of the University acting as benefactor to

the community, the latter takes the more realistic point of departure of the University being in partnership with the community. In 2005 we established the Community Interaction Division, which falls under the jurisdiction of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, just as the other two core functions of teaching and research also each fall under a Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Through this structure the many and diverse ways in which the University interacts with the community can be co-ordinated and improved. For example, two years ago we started the Partner Schools project, working with about twenty historically disadvantaged schools in the Stellenbosch area, with the aim of raising the low levels of entry into the University from these schools. (Before 2005 the average number of new students from these schools was less than two dozen per year.)

A project close to my own heart was writing up the history of *Die Vlakke* – “The Flats”, Stellenbosch’s own District Six. Our History Department acted in a supporting role for a number of community leaders from Ida’s Valley and Cloetessville (the Coloured townships of Stellenbosch), who published a striking “people’s history” of narratives entitled *In ons bloed* (In Our Blood) in 2006. The book launch at the HB Thom Theatre on campus was for many a cathartic moment. This project was part of a more comprehensive collaborative programme known as “Reinventing Stellenbosch”, which in turn emanated from the monthly Rector/Mayor Forum that the Mayor of the time, Mr Willie Ortell, and I started in 2004.

I should say something also about the role of sport in Stellenbosch. It was clear to me from the outset that sport could be of great strategic value for the University and the Stellenbosch community. It was equally clear, however, that a change of consciousness would have to take place before this could become a reality. Some of the larger sporting codes were mired in a “good old days” mindset, with little understanding of the opportunities of entrepreneurship and no better plan for the future than that “the University should make more resources available”.

On the other hand, a few shining success stories were already emerging. The Hockey Club, for example, under inspiring leadership, was going from strength to strength on the basis of their own efforts, rather than just holding out a begging bowl to the University. Most recently, on the basis of a professional business plan, the Hockey club raised sufficient funds to construct a state-of-the-art water-based hockey field. It is equal to the best that can be found anywhere in the world, which not only ensures that other national teams regularly play against South Africa at Coetzenburg, but also that overseas teams come to Stellenbosch for their training camps, thus ensuring a steady income stream. With such trendsetters we could gradually start to change the institutional sports culture. By the end of 2006 the University had established its own Sports Company, had integrated the academic facilities of Sports Science with the activities of the respective sports clubs, and had purchased a private residential complex of more than 100 beds next to the Eerste River for the use of the Sports Company.

To some extent the aim in Vision 2012 of being an active role player in society overlaps with the aim of capacity building in Africa. The latter just plays out in a broader arena, building an extended network of links to other African countries. Already there are wonderful stories to be told of new initiatives and progress over the past 5 years.

Here I would like to make special mention of our Faculty of Agrisciences, which has found imaginative ways of combining research and entrepreneurship with community interaction initiatives in African

countries. A good example is the initiative known as ASNAPP – Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural African Plant Products. ASNAPP focuses on the development and empowerment of small farmers who grow plant products such as herbal teas, spices, oils and medicinal plants. It is active in South Africa, Ghana, Rwanda, Senegal and Zambia, with a network of more than 2 000 suppliers. Bearing in mind that every small farmer on average supports a family of six, the socio-economic impact of these activities is considerable. ASNAPP also has partnerships with 15 tertiary and research institutions in South Africa, the rest of Africa and America – including the highly respected Rutgers University in New Jersey. Philanthropic aid from USAID was recently extended to 2008. This is a success story that the ASNAPP management sums up as follows:

To date, ASNAPP has laid a solid foundation from which to build its work in future. It aims to achieve a continuous increase in the number of successful enterprises on the back of its market-orientated strategy and sound scientific and technological interventions. The project hopes to serve as model for sustainable development and successful rural entrepreneurship – not only across Africa but also in the rest of the developing world, where agriculture is so closely linked to food security and poverty alleviation.

By 2006 all faculties had already launched a number of African initiatives. In the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences one may mention, for example, the Africa Centre for HIV/AIDS in the Workplace, which was established in 2003 with a postgraduate diploma in HIV/AIDS management as the primary focus. (The course was later extended to include a Master's degree.) Their academic programme has already produced 1 732 graduates, of whom 64 were Master's students. The Centre is not only actively involved in research activities but also strongly engaged in community mobilisation, through the use of educational theatre. The demographic profile of the Africa Centre's students is somewhat different from that of the average Matie class. In 2006/2007 its students came from 21 countries, 15 of them in Africa; they represented 84 professions and spoke 56 languages. Their average age was 43 years, 99% of the students are black and 82% are women. The working environments from which the students came represent about 6 million people, which creates exciting possibilities for the impact that the course can (and must) have outside of the academic world. The Centre has also just established a satellite division in Ghana.

The same kinds of stories can be told about other academic areas. The Network of African Congregational Theology (NetAct) is headquartered at the Stellenbosch Faculty of Theology. Stellenbosch is a core member of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), and provides all its administrative and financial services. The Desmond Tutu Centre for Tuberculosis is actively engaged in research and community interaction in Zambia. Thus Stellenbosch University can already show a number of active collaborations in other African countries.

The aim in Vision 2012 regarding "a diversity of people and ideas" is one that I have addressed in many papers and speeches, some of which appear in this book. Here I will therefore confine myself to reporting some results. As regards a diversity of students, the message is simple: over the past 5 years the representation of Coloured/Black/Indian students at Stellenbosch University increased by 70% in terms of numbers, and by 44% as a percentage of total student numbers. The following Table shows the growth curve:



STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONTACT EDUCATION STUDENTS BY LEVEL OF STUDY AND RACE FOR 2001 TO 2006<sup>1</sup>

YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>UNDERGRADUATE</b>						
Number	12228	12698	13416	13446	13863	14173
Race						
White	10525	10704	10947	10909	11088	11167
Coloured	1346	1518	1776	1890	2036	2195
Black	234	336	504	471	550	617
Indian	123	140	189	176	189	194
Percentage Coloured, Black & Indian	13.9%	15.7%	18.4%	18.9%	20.0%	21.2%
<b>POSTGRADUATE</b>						
Number	6031	6160	6341	6857	7244	7420
Race						
White	4132	4091	4124	4172	4213	4315
Coloured	663	656	662	860	1017	1042
Black	1050	1160	1289	1586	1782	1838
Indian	186	253	266	239	232	225
Percentage Coloured, Black & Indian	31.5%	33.6%	35.0%	39.2%	41.8%	41.8%
<b>ALL STUDENTS</b>						
Number	18259	18858	19757	20303	21107	21593
Race						
White	14657	14795	15071	15081	15301	15482
Coloured	2009	2174	2438	2750	3053	3237
Black	1284	1496	1793	2057	2332	2455
Indian	309	393	455	415	421	419
Percentage Coloured, Black & Indian	19.7%	21.5%	23.7%	25.7%	27.5%	28.3%

<sup>1</sup> Special students excluded

It is worth noting that in terms of total student numbers Stellenbosch University grew only moderately from 2001 to 2006, namely from 18,259 to 21,593 students. This represents a growth of 18,3% over the whole period, or just over 3% per year on average. Over the same period, however, the total number of Coloured/Black/Indian students grew from 3,602 to 6,111, thus by about 70% in total, or 11,6% per year on average. The growth rate of White students over the same period was 5,6% in total, or less than 1% per year on average. At postgraduate level more than 40% of students are now Coloured/Black/Indian, and at undergraduate level more than 20%.

The improvement in the diversity profile of students is important not only in terms of intake or presence, however, but also in terms of success. In our Faculty of Health Sciences, for example, by 2005 more than 50% of new students enrolling for the MBChB degree were from the Coloured /Black/Indian communities. The Faculty follows a selection policy that focuses not only on school-leaving results, but also attempts to level the playing field by taking into account environmental circumstances and extra-curricular activities. To date all indications are that students from formerly disadvantaged environments who are admitted to the Faculty under this policy perform just as well as those who obtained higher school-leaving results in

more privileged schools. This supports the idea of measuring performance relative to context, as in done in the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that the average drop-out figure for Coloured/Black/Indian students across the University is much higher than for White students, especially in the first year of study. It was precisely this worrying fact that led to the establishment of the First-Year Academy in 2006.

As far as academic staff are concerned, progress towards diversity is not particularly impressive. In 2002 only 8,8% of the academic staff were not White, and by 2006 that percentage had risen to 13,8%. One might do the sums and conclude that relatively speaking this is good growth (56%), but the fact remains that in absolute terms the representation of Coloured/Black/Indian academics remains very low. The picture is even worse when one looks at the senior academic ranks, as represented in Senate for example. In 2002 only 4,9% of members of the Senate were not White, and by 2006 that percentage had increased fractionally to 7,1%.

Fortunately there are some hopeful developments. The senior managers of the University – the so-called General Managers Meeting – had at the beginning of 2002 only one member who was not a White male, but are now a considerably more diverse group. Representation of women has also notably increased in Senate. In 2002 only 8% of members of Senate were women, but by 2006 this had more than doubled to 17,6%.

As regards the item in Vision 2012 concerning the promotion of Afrikaans, one starts with a paradox. To make Stellenbosch any *more* of an Afrikaans university than it already was at the time of my arrival in 2002 would simply have been to entrench the University as an Afrikaans enclave. This would have gone against the grain of the other aims and strategic objectives of Vision 2012, as I argue in the chapter "What is an Afrikaans university?". Our objective as stated in Vision 2012 was that Afrikaans should still serve as language of teaching and science in Stellenbosch by 2012. To achieve this, the promotion of Afrikaans would have to take place in terms of a change of consciousness about the place and role of Afrikaans in South Africa, rather than as a numbers game regarding its presence at Stellenbosch. I had already made this point in the language vision I presented to the Council in 2001:

How will Afrikaans be able to grow? It will grow if it always has challenges to face. It will grow if Afrikaans speakers themselves work with it and for it. It will grow if we build language partnerships. It will grow through its achievements and through being of service. But Afrikaans will not grow as long as Afrikaans speakers do not reach out to others. It will not grow as long as we try to claim "rights" that we do not wish to grant to other languages. It will not grow in the linguistic equivalent of an Orania.<sup>1</sup>

In a sense the mindset regarding Afrikaans that I encountered in Stellenbosch in 2002 was similar to the mindset of major sports codes like rugby and athletics: an inability to see current challenges and opportunities as anything other than a decline of former glory, without any critical consideration of the circumstances of those times, or sober evaluation of the possibilities of the present.



I was never quite able to share the anxiety about the "survival" of Afrikaans, perhaps because in my view it flows largely from the "good old days" syndrome. I think it is futile to try and map out the future of Afrikaans in terms of the status it enjoyed at the height of Afrikaner political power. To implement the idea of an Afrikaans university based on the identity model, and then to elevate this model to the status of a "last-ditch stand", is just to repeat in the name of Afrikaans a number of the mistakes made before in the name of Afrikanerdom.

I have always believed that the primary and most effective means whereby Stellenbosch can promote Afrikaans nationally and internationally is to excel academically as a top university, thus demonstrating to a sceptical world what an academically-oriented Afrikaans university is capable of. That we are well on the way towards achieving this goal I have already explained above. It is ironical that many of the older Stellenbosch community are not able to appreciate this point, because to them (as I pointed out in the chapter "Transformation as demythologisation") Stellenbosch has always been the epitome of excellence.

How, then, can we measure the state of the University in terms of Vision 2012's goal regarding Afrikaans? Here are three examples.

First, we must be able to say what Stellenbosch is doing to promote Afrikaans as an academic asset. Stellenbosch University's Department of Afrikaans and Dutch is the biggest in the country (although we are nowhere near the biggest university) and is known for initiatives such as writing laboratories, workshops on the language professions, symposia on the various aspects of language and literature, and the Master's degree in Creative Writing in Afrikaans. Stellenbosch is an acknowledged centre for advanced research on lexicography, including Afrikaans lexicography. Some of the most important dictionaries of Afrikaans were written or developed by academics of the University and the (independent) *Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal* (Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language), which is housed within the University.

One of the success stories of the past five years has been the establishment of the Language Centre in 2002, and the many ways in which it has been promoting the cause of Afrikaans and multilingualism. To return for a moment to the analogy with sport: in somewhat the same way as the Hockey Club started looking after itself, the Language Centre demonstrated from the outset the best features of academic entrepreneurship. The University remains the single largest funder of the Language Centre, but it also generates a substantial part of its own income through various forms of service provision. The well-known annual *Woordfees* (Word Fest) is another good example of entrepreneurship. The University remains one of the main sponsors of this event, but it would certainly not have achieved its renowned depth and scope without professional fundraising and management.

The academic and cultural activities regarding Afrikaans taking place at Stellenbosch University also have a significant overlap with our community interaction portfolio. I have already mentioned the Partner Schools project; another example is the WOW project ("Words Open Worlds"), which reaches thousands of school pupils every year.

The second point to make is that Vision 2012 posits the promotion of Afrikaans *in the context of multilingualism* – but multilingualism was not a strong feature of the Stellenbosch that I encountered in 2002. Five years later it is fair to say that we have made good progress, through our Language Centre and the Department of African Languages, with promoting the idea of trilingualism, which is increasingly becoming

a reality in the Western Cape. Our public events, such as graduation ceremonies, are no longer unilingually Afrikaans – although admittedly we still seem to find it hard to incorporate some basic isiXhosa. Our Senate meetings are now supplied with a simultaneous translation service, so that everyone can follow the debates and participate in them. Our campus notice boards are gradually becoming trilingual. The goodwill towards the University (and Afrikaans) that we reap from these small but significant initiatives represents an enormous dividend from a small investment. Such changes mean a lot to visitors, but they mean even more to our own staff and students who do not speak or cannot even understand Afrikaans.

It is important to realise that there must be and will be students and staff at Stellenbosch University who do not understand Afrikaans. There are a number of our academic activities which simply would not exist at Stellenbosch unless they were conducted in English. For example, our Faculty of Military Sciences, which doubles as the Military Academy in Saldanha, owes its existence to a contract between the University and the South African National Defence Force. The Defence Force operates in English only, and therefore we do the same with the Faculty of Military Sciences in English. The same kind of reasoning applies in other areas of the University. Our international liaisons are conducted in English; many postgraduate students can communicate only in English; many of our taught Master's degrees are offered in English, and so on. Any academic programme that is available at Stellenbosch but nowhere else in the country is offered in English – Forestry is a well-known example. Without the activities conducted in English, Stellenbosch would be a poorer place academically. What that means is that in striving for a sensible measure of multilingualism, we are also making a contribution to the pursuit of academic excellence.

It is noticeable that there is an increased demand for entry-level Afrikaans courses.<sup>2</sup> More requests are being received for credit-bearing courses, also from outside the University, and a growing number of international students (who enter via the International Office) wish to enrol for such courses. As regards isiXhosa, two developments deserve special mention. One is the series of terminological dictionaries being published in isiXhosa – a project which receives wide acclaim from other universities at conferences attended by our academics. Second, there is a growing demand for courses in basic isiXhosa competency, so much so that the University is already experiencing capacity problems in this regard. These courses are not offered on campus only, but also to external clients, such as the course for hospital staff being offered in the greater Western Cape area.

The third point to mention is that we would like to position Stellenbosch as the university of first choice for all Afrikaans speakers. (This was also one of my personal goals in my vision statement of 2001.) To do so it is necessary to consider what it is that would attract Afrikaans speakers to Stellenbosch. The reflex response to this question is surely "Afrikaans" – but as with most reflex responses that is not necessarily the correct answer. A comprehensive study conducted in 2005 into the nature and value of the Stellenbosch University trademark (referred to in the Preface to our Self-Evaluation Report for the HEQC) showed very clearly that the single greatest drawcard for new students to come to Stellenbosch was academic excellence. Teaching being available in Afrikaans was only fourth on the list of reasons given by prospective students for wanting to come to Stellenbosch. In response to a similar question about the positive characteristics of Stellenbosch, current students listed "Afrikaans as primary language of tuition" as only the seventh most important characteristic.

This feedback is supported by the fact that many Afrikaans-speaking students choose to study at the University of the Western Cape, or the University of Cape Town, where the language of tuition is almost exclusively English. In 2005, for example, there were 23% more Coloured Afrikaans-speaking students at UWC than at Stellenbosch. (In total there were at that stage 2,5 times more Coloured students at UWC than there were at Stellenbosch – and even at the University of Cape Town there were 6% more Coloured students than at Stellenbosch.) Tuition in Afrikaans does not seem to be a strong drawcard for enrolling at a particular university. Many other factors feature higher on the list. For those who are poor, the level of tuition fees, the availability of bursaries, the accessibility of the campus, and/or the availability of accommodation are critically important, while those who are affluent give more weight to hedonistic factors such as the “quality of student life” or “nature of the environment”. But without exception, the single most important consideration is the academic quality of the institution.

On the other hand, it is also true that there is a feedback loop between the presence of Afrikaans students already on campus and the choice that Afrikaans-speaking prospective students exercise whether to come here or not. It has therefore been important to keep a watchful eye on whether the drawcards of a high academic standard, an attractive environment and all the other elements in our recruitment strategy were maintaining a significant presence of Afrikaans-speaking students. The figures show that we have been quite successful in this regard. The percentage of Afrikaans-speaking students at Stellenbosch has not changed by more than a few percentage points over the past five years. In 2002 70,8% of students at the US were Afrikaans speaking, and in 2006 the figure was 68,2%. Even in the Arts Faculty, which had been the focal point of the fears and public debate around the T-option (i.e. bilingualism), the percentage of Afrikaans-speaking students varied little: from 63,9% in 2002 to 61,8% in 2005.

As far as the T-option is concerned: as mentioned in the chapter entitled “What is an Afrikaans University?”, the T-option is nothing more or less than a license to use English in the presentation of a predominantly Afrikaans-language module. What the T-option is not is a simplistic repetition of everything that has been said in the one language also in the second language. Yet it was precisely on this erroneous assumption that all kinds of number games played out in the Afrikaans press, usually taking the number of teaching modules in which the T-option was available as a measure of the extent of *verengelsing* (“englishification”) at the University.

This is not a meaningful measure, for two reasons. The first and simplest reason is that modules vary considerably in length and student numbers. A “module” could be anything from a presentation of 24 lectures to a few students, to 120 lectures for hundreds of students. The other and more fundamental reason is that modules differ greatly in methods of presentation, from passive lecturer-to-student transfer of knowledge to active and individual student learning processes. In fact, behind the T-option and indeed behind the language debate there are a number of obsolete assumptions about what “teaching” actually entails. The balance has increasingly shifted towards active learning rather than passive reception of tuition. I made this point in the University’s official annual report for 2005:

The time is long past that teaching at university entailed a man in a white coat writing notes on a blackboard with white chalk. A large part of the teaching at our University now takes place in a technologically mediated way, for example, by using a software package called Web-CT. This is an interactive medium which supports the teaching process in the classroom by offering tutorials,

chatrooms, assignments, assessment and feedback in cyberspace. No wonder that students now spend more time in front of the computer than in the classroom. For those who cannot afford their own computers, the University offers several computer laboratories, which are fully utilised, often until late at night. Gradually we have increased the emphasis on learning, and decreased the emphasis on teaching. This change reflects the reality that the education of students, as well as their competitiveness in the labour market, has more to do with their ability to learn for themselves than with their ability to absorb teaching.

This is not the place to expound on the state of Afrikaans, but I must say that in my view Afrikaans is not doing too badly in democratic South Africa. Afrikaans Festivals such as the KKNK (*Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees*), *Aardklop* and the *Woordfees* are thriving concerns. The Afrikaans press is flourishing. Afrikaans literature has no shortage of new writers. Afrikaans discussion groups have simply exploded in cyberspace. Every evening the country avidly watches *Sewende Laan* on TV. To jeopardise the ideal of academic excellence at Stellenbosch in this new world, for the sake of an identity model of an Afrikaans university, would be, in my view, to set our ambitions for Afrikaans too low. I would like to repeat what I said in 2001 in my vision statement for Afrikaans at Stellenbosch:

Our task is not to make rules and regulations for the "protection" of Afrikaans. Our task is to create an atmosphere in which creativity and participation can flourish. We must act in such a way that people would wish to join us, that they will feel at home, that we can communicate with ease. It is part of the task of a university to expose students (and staff) to the challenges they will confront in the real world. And in real life we must be able to communicate across many boundaries. Insofar as the "survival" of Afrikaans is at issue, I believe that this will depend on whether all Afrikaans speakers will be able to make peace with, and participate in, the post-1994 dispensation in South Africa. This is our new world. ...

What is there to be afraid of? To find our way through the new world we must first find the self-confidence to join that new world. And there, I believe, we shall find much to do, much to achieve, much to our advantage, and much to enjoy.

Finally, to sum up: as an academic with 30 years of experience, on four continents, as a lecturer, researcher and manager, I am convinced on professional grounds of two things about the state of the University of Stellenbosch. The one is that the University is now better placed academically than ever before. The other is that, if the growth curve of the past few years can be sustained, Stellenbosch stands a realistic chance of becoming unquestionably the top university in South Africa. My hope is that the University of Stellenbosch will continue to fulfil this ambition.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Orania is a small self-proclaimed Afrikaner homeland.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Prof Leon de Stadler, Director of the Language Centre, for the information in this paragraph.



## *PART II*

*Key speeches,  
documents and  
views*





# INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL VISION STATEMENT, 2001

March 2001

When I was invited to apply in 2001 for the position of Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University I had to think carefully about the future of the University. What follows is the Vision Statement I offered, and on the basis of which I was appointed. On re-reading it six years later I am satisfied that the analysis I gave at that time was valid, that the goals I set out matched the ideas already taking root at the University, and that we have made considerable progress in the interim towards reaching those goals.

"I see Stellenbosch as an institute dedicated to creating intellectual capital for building a knowledge economy in South Africa." That is how I saw the future of the University from afar in 2001. I am still of this view, albeit in somewhat more nuanced form.

# Personal Vision statement for Stellenbosch University

March 2001

My vision of the future is:

The University of Stellenbosch leads the creation and expansion of the knowledge economy in South Africa.

## Background

Universities worldwide are at present undergoing a process of change. I discern four forces at work in this process:

- **The changing relationship between the state and the university.** Many assumptions about the role of the state in tertiary education have changed considerably over the past decade. We are moving from a situation in which the state asked for little but paid for much towards one in which greater intervention from the state is paralleled by declining state subsidies. The rationale for this is usually based on an analysis of what the state's responsibilities are (social justice, job creation, quality control, etc.), and of what the duties of a university are (obtaining income from student fees, interaction with industry and business, utilisation of intellectual property rights, etc.). There is a strong sense that higher education and research will be key factors in the new knowledge economy, but little clarity about how the benefits of this will be fed back to the universities.
- **The change in student demographics.** The average student is no longer necessarily a young person who, immediately after leaving school, goes to study at a university for an uninterrupted period of three to four years. Undergraduate and postgraduate studies are increasingly being undertaken in interrupted phases. Students may be of any age, usually have at least a part-time job and did not necessarily grow up in the area where they are studying. Some areas of study are still geared towards broadening students' background or to the assimilation of knowledge, but many other kinds are goal-directed attempts to acquire specific skills for a specific labour market.
- **The rate of development in information and communication technology (ICT).** Teaching, research and the management of universities must increasingly adapt to the rapid development of ICT. Our planning horizons are thus shifting ever closer, and the need for adaptability increases accordingly. Because of the explosion of knowledge and the growing availability of the internet, universities can no longer be regarded as the only, or even the natural, source of advanced knowledge.



- **Globalisation.** People, goods, capital and information increasingly move across the globe with little regard for national boundaries. Students can thus reasonably expect that their training will make them internationally competitive, researchers should be able to operate at an international level and universities must expect to be compared with like institutions in other parts of the world.

### **The manifestation of change at the University of Stellenbosch**

These four forces manifest themselves in different ways at different places, depending on local circumstances. My impression is that the following factors apply in the case of Stellenbosch:

- In the new political dispensation (since 1994) the University's relationship to the political power base in the country has changed from that of insider to that of outsider. It is from this new position that the University must respond to the state's demands for affirmative action and greater insistence on community participation, as well as the declining levels of state funding.
- Demographic changes at the University of Stellenbosch over the past few years are clearly evident from the broader distribution of the student body along the spectrum of colour and language.
- One manifestation of the role of ICT at the University is the introduction of distance education, with the concomitant change in student demographics. The next step, I assume, will be a parallel emphasis on "flexible delivery" – making available the benefits of ICT-driven tuition also to students who do in fact have access to the campus.
- In South Africa it is all too obvious that people want to, and can, move across national borders. The diaspora of South Africans (now including Afrikaans speakers), however, is in my view no longer exclusively linked to the socio-political conditions in the country – it is equally a manifestation of a new borderless global community. I would guess that there are few students at Stellenbosch who are not considering the possibility of spending some time in London or New York, and many members of staff must sometimes – think that a salary paid in pounds or dollars would not be a bad idea.

### **What, then, is the road ahead for the University of Stellenbosch?**

What we need in the first instance is a considered, comprehensible and common intellectual platform. We must situate ourselves within the ambit of what it means to be a university – what kind of university is Stellenbosch? We must have a profile in the international community – what is Stellenbosch known for? We must be able to say what our intellectual, cultural and functional roles are within the complexities of the South African social organism – what does Stellenbosch stand for? And we must understand how we fit into the country's economy – what is Stellenbosch's contribution?

I see the University of Stellenbosch as an institution devoted to the creation of intellectual capital to promote a knowledge economy in South Africa. By "intellectual capital" I understand the knowledge, skills and insights that stem from intellectual labour, and the way this is linked to the public interest. By "knowledge economy" I understand an economic system that has intellectual capital as its base. By the "creationbuilding up" of intellectual capital I understand the promotion of that kind of entrepreneurial spirit and innovative energy that continues to produce new ideas.

I see the University of Stellenbosch as taking the lead in creating and expanding a knowledge economy in South Africa. To be able to do this, Stellenbosch must be a research-driven institution, constantly growing in national and international stature. Research consists of the development and integration of knowledge, and it connects with the public interest by the way it is applied and disseminated. My vision is one of research and teaching in healthy interaction with one another, not one in the service of the other. At a conceptual level I see a direct link between fundamental and applied research: both will take place within the context of certain focus areas, and both will function with an institutional flexibility that will permit us to act quickly and decisively within an environment of change. In such a context the traditional values of high-quality teaching and fundamental research can engage with the new ideas of directed and socially responsive teaching and research.

I see Stellenbosch as the university of first choice for Afrikaans speakers, but with a broad demographic profile, across boundaries of age, colour, language, wealth and origin. I think of the University of Stellenbosch as the natural home and mouthpiece of a minority group that realises its survival depends on reaching out, not on exclusivity. I believe that the University must cultivate students and staff who have a local loyalty but a global perspective – people who do not forget where they came from, but who have the knowledge, skills and insight to move comfortably across many boundaries.

I see the University of Stellenbosch as thinking realistically about self-financing. State income and income from student fees will at best be sufficient for survival, but not for growth and progress. If we wish to flourish, if we wish to have the freedom to manage teaching and research as intellectual rather than production-line activities, we shall have to work at making this affordable. We need to be able to convert our intellectual capital into real capital – not because we wish to become a business enterprise, but precisely because we need a source of income to reinvest in new knowledge, skills and insights. Intellectual capital is the currency of the knowledge economy: we need to build it up through research and teaching, and we must find ways and means to trade in it.

# Reaction

## Maties choose a Rector and say: "We are open to new influences"

*Rapport*, 27 May 2001

Last week the Council of the University of Stellenbosch surprised everyone by choosing Prof. Chris Brink as its new rector.

HANLIE RETIEF spoke to Prof. Chris Brink

Stellenbosch's Rector designate is waiting at the international departure hall at Johannesburg airport, his suitcase with him, his woven tie from Lesotho slightly askew.

It's only minutes before Chris Brink returns to Sydney, back to the University of Wollongong and his family, where his son turns one year old today.

He speaks quietly, the Upington accent still noticeable, and nothing about his expression reveals anything of the tension of the past weekend: his appointment has in fact been described as the biggest surprise at Stellenbosch over the past ten years.

He was the outsider in the race for this sought-after position – and that is putting it mildly. Because he was in the race without the networks of his competitor for the post, Prof. Rolf Stumpf – already the Vice-Rector and on site to promote his cause, while Brink was in Wollongong – and without Stumpf's insider knowledge of Stellenbosch.

There was even some gossip to the effect that he was an English Brink, with the suggestion that he would be unsympathetic towards Afrikaners.

But then Chris Brink arrived last Saturday morning at the academy among the oaks. And in his interview with the Council he spoke most persuasively about his dream for the future for Maties, apparently without the least hint of an ideological undertone about Afrikaans. In his fine Upington Afrikaans.

Aged 50, he will be by far the youngest Rector that Stellenbosch has ever had – young enough for more than one five-year term. He is one of the new wave of young movers and shakers in the country.

And the renewal goes beyond just the issue of age. Brink, like Stumpf, came in from the outside – with the Senate's blessing. This is an indication of the final break with the old dispensation and the days, not all that long ago, when Stellenbosch was known for its "inbreeding" when it came to academics.

Brink himself says he is "most satisfied with what I have seen now. There a spirit of renewal and my appointment enhances this spirit."

It was a brave decision, he says twice, emphatically, during the interview.

"It was the familiar situation of insider and outsider candidates. The appointment happened to coincide with the great emotional debate around language. You know, under such circumstances decision makers find it difficult to distinguish between processes and to take decisions, not on the basis of things that coincidentally happen at the same time, but on the basis of the things that are relevant to the appointment process itself.

"I see my appointment also as a message that the University has an appreciation of experience brought in from the outside. It shows that the University is open to new influences and that they are keen to utilise this kind of outside experience."

And he certainly does have experience – sixteen years at seven local and foreign universities. "If your decisions are taken not only on the basis of internal and local circumstances, but also within a global context, they mean so much more. I think this is something that interested the Council."

His years at the University of Cape Town under Dr Mamphela Ramphele were full of lessons on transformation, he says.

"It was an extremely interesting time in the country, and Dr Ramphele had a particular influence on the University. Her ideas on transformation made sense to me: first, that it is *necessary*, but also that it is *desirable* because people will want to undertake it once they realise the advantages for themselves.

"It thus entails linking many ideas that may seem to be contradictory and then dealing with them simultaneously. One of these ideas was linking the concepts of excellence and equity. The idea that you could bring together apparently contradictory things and then let them influence one another to their mutual benefit – that remained with me."

This brings us to the two big issues: language and transformation.

"Exactly. These two things are not in conflict with one another. The point of departure must not be language *or* transformation, but language *and* transformation, in collaboration with one another.

"I do not see that as a problem that must be solved, but rather as a situation that must be managed, where decisions are taken in an inclusive and pragmatic way so that you transform in the demographic sense, but still retain Afrikaans as point of departure.

"In the document on my vision for the future I said that I would like to see the University of Stellenbosch position itself as university of first choice for all Afrikaans speakers – those who are comfortable in Afrikaans, whether it is their first, second or third language. "At the same time I also want to see that this goes hand in hand with a transformation process whereby the University can broaden its demographic profile.

"I think Stellenbosch can make a strong case for being a university where Afrikaans is the primary language of instruction. I think the University must make such a case."But at the same time I do not think that this is something that this University or any other can claim as a necessary right."

He has not yet had much time to form a full impression of the University. He mentions a "useful discussion" with the current Rector, Prof. Andreas van Wyk, and the questions from staff members at a short meeting with him.

"One question was: what do I see as the single greatest problem at the University of Stellenbosch? I think it is anxiety. Different people are anxious about different things. It will be a good thing if we can defuse these fears by working towards the things that we hope for, rather than devoting too much attention to the things that cause us stress. "I also said to the Council that my point of departure will be: let us defuse the current situation, move away from the idea that things are antagonistically ranged against one another, and rather seek ways whereby things can mutually influence one another beneficially.

"I also covered matters with the Council such as the issue of Afrikaans and its use as medium of instruction, and how many Afrikaans-speaking universities there can actually be in the country."

But he does not want to give details; he rather pleads for calm, asking that people do not adopt unduly strong views too quickly. "I have a great deal of confidence in the panel members of the Gerwel committee. It was an outstanding idea of the President to get people like Prof. Jakes Gerwel and Antjie Krog to come up with well thought-through views.

"I support the idea that the five historically Afrikaans universities (HAUs) submit a well-argued standpoint to the committee. I envisage taking part in the consultations and I will even be able to come here for a few days."

He obtained doctorates in mathematics and philosophy at the University of Cambridge and RAU respectively. "I am a logician. It's interesting: logic is foundational in the humanities. As a researcher my experience therefore lies in the area where philosophy, mathematics and computer science overlap. I have spent a lot of time on computer science and artificial intelligence and the like. Once again: it is the area of overlap that interests me, rather than the discrete nature of categories."

He is expected to place Stellenbosch high up on the ladder of academic excellence, both nationally and internationally.

The University of Wollongong, where he is currently Vice-Rector, has been Australia's University of the Year for the past two years. One of the awards was for Brink's portfolio: research and development, specifically with respect to the links with the business world and industry.

"I could take the concepts which I began to develop at the University of Cape Town further at Wollongong. I could learn so much about their implementation there, and what sound consequences this interaction had for research itself.

"In another, past debate people agonised about pure and applied research. But the same applies here: do not see them as two separate things in conflict with one another. They are simply two sides of the same coin, in interaction with one another."

He also does not want to say too much about the interaction between two other themes: the traditionalist and the transformer. "Yes, I am a transformer. But this must not be read as implying an entrenched point of view. I am careful about placing people in categories", he says in his phlegmatic way. Then: "The appointment has been made, so now everyone can settle down".

Until he returns. On a one-way ticket. Because there's work to be done.

*(With acknowledgement to Rapport)*

# INTRODUCTION TO PERSONAL LANGUAGE VISION

May 2001

By the middle of 2001, after I had been appointed as Rector and Vice-Chancellor but before I had taken up my position, I became aware of the Afrikaans language debate – the *taaldebat*. It became clear to me that there were people who fear for the survival of Afrikaans, who believe that the language should be “protected”, and who saw Stellenbosch University as the instrument for doing so. I therefore added to my Vision Statement for the University an explicit Language Vision, which follows.

I am proud of this Language Vision. Everything I would still want to say about Afrikaans at Stellenbosch can be found in this document. [For non-Afrikaans speakers just a word of explanation about the title. The Afrikaans writer CJ Langenhoven – a kind of *paterfamilias* to Stellenbosch – wrote a canonical essay called *Ons weg deur die wêreld* – “Our way through the world”. I thought it was time to consider our way through the world of today.] I still believe that to make “survival” your primary focus for Afrikaans is to have a low ambition for the language. I still believe that to turn Stellenbosch into a kind of Orania [a miniscule self-styled “homeland” for Afrikaners] is doing no favour to Afrikaans and doing harm to the University. I still believe that it is not the task of the University to make rules and regulations for the “protection” of Afrikaans.

It is possible and desirable for Stellenbosch to go the route of an Afrikaans university. But I have learnt that considerably more thought should go into the question of what we mean by an “Afrikaans university”, hence my essay on this topic elsewhere in this book.

The one question that remains with me after five years at Stellenbosch is the question with which I concluded my Language Vision: “What is there to be afraid of?”

# Our way through the new world

## A vision for Afrikaans at the Stellenbosch University

18 May 2001

A striking feature of the current language debate about Afrikaans is that many of the participants have such low ambitions for the language. It seems that their highest expectations are often merely "the survival of Afrikaans" – as if survival is in itself some kind of triumph.

My ambition for the language is considerably higher. Afrikaans must not only survive; it must grow and prosper. Afrikaans is a product of Africa; it faces the same opportunities and threats as any other language in Africa. It can be anything that Afrikaans speakers<sup>1</sup> make of it. The language is free, not as a special case, but in company with other free languages.

Under what conditions will Afrikaans be able to grow? It will grow if it is faced with challenges. It will grow if Afrikaans speakers will work with it, and for it. It will grow if we form language partnerships. It will grow through its achievements and through being of service. But Afrikaans will not grow if Afrikaans speakers do not reach out to others. It will not grow if we claim "rights" for it that other languages do not have. It will not grow in the language equivalent of an Orania<sup>2</sup>.

I see the development of Afrikaans up to the present in three historical stages. In the first stage Afrikaans had to fight for recognition as a new rising language. This was a time when people looked down on the language, and obstacles were placed in its path. But it was also the time during which Afrikaans grew lean and fit, precisely because it had a mountain to climb. In the second stage the pendulum swung to the other side. This was the time when Afrikaans was used as the instrument of a ruling party that had the intention and the means to impose its will on others. (Let us never forget about Afrikaans in Soweto in 1976.) We are now in the third stage. There is a democratic dispensation. There are 11 official languages. In so far as Afrikaans has rights, these rights are entrenched in the Constitution. There are no obstacles in the path of the language comparable to those of the first stage, and there are no privileges comparable to that of the second stage.

I think this is good. It gives us Afrikaans speakers an opportunity to regain that fitness that comes from having to run uphill rather than sliding down the other side. The growth and development of Afrikaans lies in our own mouths and hands. We have more challenges than threats. We have enough opportunities; we do not have to ask for favours. I think we can already see signs of a new dawn for Afrikaans. Since the disappearance of the dead hand of state "protection", there have been new ways of speaking and thinking, a new enthusiasm, a new literature, new blood. Afrikaans speakers are in effect bringing about their own Renaissance.

Against this background, then, my vision for Afrikaans at the University of Stellenbosch:

I see Stellenbosch University as central in an Afrikaans Renaissance.

It is not our task to make rules and regulations for the "protection" of Afrikaans. Our task is to create an atmosphere in which creativity and participation can flourish. We must act in such a way that people will want to join us, that they will feel at home, and that we can communicate without restraint. It is part of a university's task to expose students (and staff) to challenges that they will face in real life. And in real life we must be able to communicate with confidence across many boundaries. As far as the "survival" of Afrikaans is concerned, I believe that this will depend on whether all Afrikaans speakers can make their peace with, and become participants in, the post-1994 dispensation in South Africa. This is our new world.

Within this context let me mention some practical aspects of the position on Afrikaans expressed in "My vision of the future of the Stellenbosch University".

- It is unrealistic to expect that any university in South Africa will provide tuition exclusively in Afrikaans.
- It is unrealistic to think that there can be five universities in South Africa that will use Afrikaans as primary medium of instruction.
- It is realistic to think that there can be one, and probably two, universities that use Afrikaans as primary medium of instruction.
- Stellenbosch can make an excellent case for being such a university – and Stellenbosch must-should do so.
- The University should participate in the current debate on Afrikaans as part of the transformation process at universities.
- The University should expand the demographic profile of its students and staff.
- The use of Afrikaans as primary medium of instruction should not impede demographic change.
- The use of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University is not a problem to be solved, but an issue to be managed.

The University has already provided a foundation for implementating these ideas. The Strategic Framework mentions two very important points in this regard. The first is that the University must take Afrikaans as "point of departure". This allows room for internally driven enthusiasm and growth. Secondly, the Strategic Framework states unequivocally that "The University acknowledges its contribution to the injustices of the past, and therefore commits itself to appropriate redress and development initiatives. We can build an entirely new future on these two points.

What is there to be afraid of? In order to find our way through this new world, we first need to be able to find our place fully within it, with faith in ourselves. And there, I believe, we shall find much to do, much to our benefit, and much to enjoy.



## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> "Afrikaans speakers" does not refer only to white Afrikaners. Nor only to those whose mother tongue or home language is Afrikaans. "Afrikaans speakers" refers to all those who can think and speak comfortably in Afrikaans, who enjoy the language and see their use of it as part of their life experience. This includes those who speak Afrikaans as their second or third language.
- <sup>2</sup> Orania is a miniscule self-proclaimed Afrikaner homeland.

# INTRODUCTION TO POSITION ON INITIATION

October 2001

In my essay "Transformation as demythologisation" I write about the myths and cultural phenomena of Stellenbosch. Strongest amongst these was the practice of initiation of new students in the halls of residence – a brutal exercise of power to force students into an (often artificial) group identity. I was totally opposed to such practices, because I believe that forcing a group identity on new students is the antithesis of what a university is supposed to do, namely inculcating a critical individual discernment. That is why I found it necessary to make known my views on this matter. To this day I cringe at the recollection of male students in dark suits being marched down the streets, military style, in columns of three.

# My position on initiation

17 October 2001

At the beginning of 2001 a Matie student died during a residence initiation ritual. This tragic event prompted a process of reflection and renewal at the University about the way in which we welcome our new students. I welcome this process and would like to support it as part of transformation at the University. In this context I offer the following points of view.

It is good that we wish to welcome our first-year students in an organised way. But it is not good *if this welcome degenerates into initiation practices*. The difference between welcoming and initiation is very simple: welcoming entails doing something *for* the new students; initiation entails doing something *to* them.

## There are several reasons why we should consistently oppose initiation practices:

- *Moral reasons*: Initiation is a form of structural violence. Structural violence takes place when the structures and process of the University itself are used by the incumbents to exercise their power over newcomers in order to enforce conformity. Such use of university structures is morally indefensible, because it is a violation of personal freedom. It is not appropriate to the character of a university, which strives for freedom of thought, association and speech.
- *Risk factors*: Initiation exposes the University to unacceptable risks. The exercise of compulsion of any kind, including collective compulsion and peer pressure to place new students in humiliating or dangerous situations is against the Constitution and a violation of human rights, and could lead to civil claims. Furthermore, the pursuit of any potentially dangerous practices is against the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993, and can lead to criminal charges. Any form of initiation thus exposes the University to possible prosecution.
- *The image of the University*: There is a general perception that the University is not prepared to do what it says as far as initiation practices are concerned. According to Section 9 of the Residence Rules, initiation is "strictly forbidden". Yet in many residences there have to date been practices, carried out with impunity, that would be described – by outsiders, at any rate – as nothing other than initiation. The perception that the University does not have the will or to implement its own policy does nothing to promote our image.
- *The future of the University*: It is essential for our development as a university community that we be exposed continuously to new influences. Under this heading, I would include a concerted attempt to recruit a higher percentage of non-white students and staff. But this endeavour can bear fruit only if we receive our new Maties from under-represented groups in a way that is acceptable to them, and within a context in which they feel comfortable. It will serve no purpose to insist that these newcomers (whether students or staff) must simply adjust to the way things

have always been done at Stellenbosch. Part of the process of mutual enrichment is precisely that we need to learn about those who come from outside.

We therefore should pay close attention to the application of our policy against initiation. This will be necessary, but it will not be sufficient. In order to oppose initiation practices a process of cultural change is also necessary in which we continuously question old assumptions, stimulate new understanding and, where necessary, change dispositions.

#### **What we need to do:**

- We must acknowledge that our residences are an integral part of student life at the University of Stellenbosch. We must respect their long history, give their alumni the necessary recognition and use them as a point of departure for our new way through the world.
- But we must also make a deliberate effort to reach out more to others and function less as a closed community. We must identify and test our own assumptions and codes of behaviour in relation to the changing environment, public opinion and the general strategic goals of the University.
- We must have a welcoming programme in place that will try to make newcomers feel welcome and that will introduce them effectively to the academic, cultural and social aspects of the University.
- We must realise that what incumbents may regard as humorous or fun, or as activities intended to promote residence spirit, newcomers and especially new Maties from under-represented groups may experience as culturally unfamiliar, insulting or even threatening. We must acknowledge the fact that all first-year students ought to be able to choose to what extent they will participate in residence activities, and we must empower them to exercise such choices.
- Every staff member or student involved in welcoming new students must accept individual responsibility for the implementation of the University's policy against initiation and for the relevant laws of the land. The University must hold all these staff members and students responsible for taking all reasonable steps in this regard.
- We must have an effective grievance and complaints procedure that respects the right of the complainant as well as the defendant, a fair disciplinary code, clear guidelines on disciplinary measures and the will to implement them.
- We must be willing and prepared to publicly state and defend any policy, practice, decision and action of the University.

#### **What we must not do:**

- We must not play semantic games. It does not help to refer to initiation as "welcoming" while it remains initiation, and it does not help to gloss over group coercion as the nurturing of "group spirit".
- We must not buy into a culture of silence. Any staff member or student head of a residence, who can reasonably be expected to be aware of undesirable practices in their residences but who shut

their eyes to these practices and take no active steps to abolish such practices, is guilty of negligence and is in fact an accomplice in any abuse that may happen within their residence. The same applies to staff members involved in welcoming programmes.

- We must not aim for a softer version of undesirable practices. We must address the assumptions behind the undesirable practices themselves and so change the culture from which such practices stem.
- We must not think that small things don't matter. For one student to fetch another student coffee is a small thing, but it is a different matter when fetching coffee is part of the incumbents' exercise of power over newcomers.
- We must not hide behind the word "tradition" when we are dealing with damaging anachronisms.
- We must not try to protect offenders out of a misplaced sense of wanting to protect the University's good name. Transparency will protect the good name of the University better than secrecy.
- We must not think that cultural change will take place overnight, but we must also not think that this is not a matter of great urgency.

The year 2001 was a watershed in our thinking about initiation practices in residences. I ascribe this to the fact that a tragic event shocked us out of our well-established comfort zones and we began to express and investigate our own assumptions. I hope that this process will continue, both in the sense of re-conceptualisation and in the practical steps through which we realise our standpoints.

# INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC OPENING

January 2002

My first official speech as Rector of Stellenbosch University was at the opening of the academic year 2002, and I used the opportunity to state some points of principle and announce some policy decisions.

At the time, most of the reaction did not arise from what I had to say about language or diversity, but two different matters altogether. One was my public apology to all those who had over time been humiliated or affected by the structural violence of initiation practices. The other was the provisional closure of the student pubs in the halls of residence, pending their legal licensing. These were matters in which I was convinced of the necessity of taking the right decision, rather than a popular decision.

*Die Matie* [the student newspaper] reported after the speech that "In the past three weeks, Stellenbosch has changed more than ever before". One further change that took place subsequently was the nature of the opening ceremony itself. Rather than just an opportunity for the Rector to give a speech, it has become a much more student-driven event, where the Chair of the Students' Representative Council gets to welcome the new students, and where the winners of the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds are announced.

# Academic opening of Stellenbosch University

30 January 2002

Thank you for coming to the first academic opening under the new Rectorship. This is traditionally the occasion where the Rector welcomes new students, and I am pleased to be able to do so today as well. Welcome to all first-year students, and may you have a successful year in 2002. What is somewhat different this year, however, is that the Rector himself is also a first-year. At such an occasion, where there has been change in the top management, it is only natural to expect that a message of renewal at the university will be sent out. I hope to satisfy this expectation. Self-renewal is, after all, the first objective set by this University in its Strategic Framework:

The University commits itself to an open, broad process of self-scrutiny and self-renewal

What is our vision for this University? We have only one vision, only one goal, only one task: We want to be a top university.

Easily said! But what does it mean?

What is the essence of a university? The essence of a university is centred on knowledge. A top university is one that deals with knowledge professionally, in the global context, and in the local context. We know now that globally we are placed within the context of a knowledge economy. In the 21st century the economic growth of nations will depend on the professionalism with which they deal with knowledge. This gives to universities a new importance. A good analogy is that just as power stations provide the electrical energy needed by the industrial economy, universities are power sources for the knowledge economy. In order to be a top university we must, therefore, be able to create, disseminate, apply and integrate knowledge. The creation of knowledge is our research task. The dissemination of knowledge is our teaching task. The application of knowledge involves our interaction with the community, with commerce and with industry. And to integrate knowledge is to rise above the concept of knowledge as a commodity, and to see knowledge as a path to the ideal of wisdom.

That is our version of the universal ideal of what it means to be a university. But then we must also ask: What makes us different? What are our local circumstances?

I would like to link this to two topics: **language**, and **diversity**.

Here is my **first opinion**: *Stellenbosch University needs more diversity*.

I know that "diversity" is easily regarded as a code word for black and white. And a more realistic racial mix is certainly an example of what I have in mind. We do need more black students, and more black staff. But that is not all I have in mind. My view is that Stellenbosch needs more diversity in the full sense of the word. We need more diversity in terms of colour, of gender, of religion, of geographic origin, of financial capacity – and, yes, of sexual orientation.

The reason why I believe we need more diversity is this: diversity has an inherent educational value. That is why we need more of it. This is an educational institution. Our business is about knowledge. That means that we all have to learn, all the time. Students learn through their lectures, their assignments, their tutorials. Staff learn through their research, through their interaction with the community, and through their teaching. One way or another, we all have to learn, and keep on learning. And this is where we will derive educational value from diversity. We will learn more from those people, those ideas, and those phenomena that we do not know, than from those we know only too well. We need around us people who represent the rich spectrum of South African life, and we need the diversity of ideas that are new to us. We need to pursue this diversity of people and ideas because of our core business – which is to learn. There is a strong argument that the pursuit of diversity should take place because we owe it to the past. But I believe there is an even stronger argument that the pursuit of diversity is necessary because we owe it to our future.

**Announcement:** It is my intention that the university should design and mount a diversity campaign.

We will set goals, benchmarks and timeframes, with the aim of showing a difference in a reasonable period of time. And we will pursue the diversity of ideas. For a healthy intellectual life, for an active learning environment, it is necessary that we should have diversity of opinion. I will return to this theme a little later, but let me first change the topic.

This brings me to language.

Here is my **second opinion**: *We would prefer to remain a predominantly Afrikaans university.*

We would like to contribute, from within this University and this town, to the further development of Afrikaans as a language of science and a medium of instruction in higher education. I believe that this is a contribution we can make to the country, and it is a contribution we would very much like to make. Please note that I have said 'predominantly Afrikaans' and not 'exclusively Afrikaans'. The latter is, I feel, undesirable – and in any case unattainable.

An obvious question I must now address is: How do you link language and diversity together? Somewhat to my surprise I have quickly realised that there is a general but often unspoken assumption that Afrikaans and diversity are incompatible. There is an uncritical point of view that if you strive for greater diversity this will pose a threat to Afrikaans. And that if you wish to develop Afrikaans, you cannot also strive for greater diversity. To this I reply 'No, that is not the case.'

Here is my **third opinion**: *The development of Afrikaans, and the development of diversity, can and must go hand in hand.*

The reason why I say this is simple: There is a great deal of diversity in and around the Afrikaans language. We just have to exploit it. Within the context of a predominantly Afrikaans university we can go a long way towards increasing our diversity. Surely, within the context of Afrikaans, we do have diversity of gender – to start with. We have far too few women in senior positions on our staff. We have a woman as chancellor, but at present we still have no women in our top management. Surely there is a pool of talent among women fluent in Afrikaans that we can make use of to our advantage. Within the context of Afrikaans, we also have diversity of creeds – it is wrong to think that Afrikaans



is essentially linked to one church or one creed. After all, one of the first uses of spoken and written Afrikaans, as early as the 19th century, was for teaching in Islamic schools in the Cape. Within the context of Afrikaans, we also have diversity of colour. Afrikaans belongs to the whole country, and we find the language in use among people of all races. The demographic figures speak for themselves. We have, within the context of Afrikaans, diversity of origin - it is not spoken only in the Western Cape. It is also not spoken only in South Africa. In Perth, there are primary schools where more than half of the children in a class speak Afrikaans. We have diversity of means - it is not only middle-class people in the suburbs who speak Afrikaans. And we have diversity of sexual preference - gays, too, speak Afrikaans.

I would like to add that, within the context of Afrikaans, we also have diversity of language. Increasingly, people feel at ease with more than one language. There are many people who are comfortable using Afrikaans who would describe themselves as having some measure of competency in Afrikaans rather than as being exclusively Afrikaans-speaking. We will be doing ourselves a favour if we move away from the exclusive idea of being mother-tongue speakers of Afrikaans, to the inclusive idea of having competence in Afrikaans. That is why we are now beginning to speak of 'Afrikaanses'. The 'Afrikaanses' are those who feel comfortable in using Afrikaans, without necessarily having acquired Afrikaans as their mother tongue.

Allow me to summarise all this with an example. It comes from an article that appeared in the journal *Lexikos*, published by the Bureau of the Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language. The author is Achmat Davids, at the time from Yale University in Connecticut. In the article he gives an example of the early use of Afrikaans:

"Already as early as 1874, Cape Muslim Afrikaans, in Arabic script, was used for the writing of a love letter from Turkey."

Isn't that wonderful? Muslim Afrikaans, one and a quarter centuries ago, in Arabic script, for a love letter from another country. Where did we lose this appreciation for the diversity of Afrikaans? And how do we get it back?

I take the view that the role of Afrikaans at the University is not so much a problem in need of a solution, as an issue in need of management. There is no blueprint - no once-off solution. But there are ongoing considerations in a changing environment. To manage the matter, we need management information. We must know where we are, before we can plan where to move to.

I can, therefore, make the following **announcement**: *We will conduct a survey of the existing uses of language for teaching purposes at the University. And from there we will proceed to the design and execution of a language management plan.*

Accordingly, I am setting three goals: First, we want to go for greater diversity. Second, we prefer to be a predominantly Afrikaans university. And third, we want to do these two things together. Language and diversity! We want to use the language as a lever for greater diversity. And we want to use greater diversity in order to broaden the language.

This is what we wish to do: we wish to pursue diversity as an educational goal. And we wish to do so within the context of a predominantly, but not exclusively, Afrikaans university.

I now return to the concept of diversity of ideas. This is where we should distinguish between the voice of the individual, and the voice of the collective. One of the strongest inhibitors of intellectual diversity is a disregard for the voice of the individual. We cannot allow the voice of the individual to be silenced by the opinion of, pressure from, the collective. We need the voice of the individual, for our own good. We need to listen to the individual, even when that voice says things that we do not wish to hear, or perhaps that we are afraid to hear. We need to empower the voice of the individual, even when it is the voice of dissent, because it will add to the diversity of ideas.

An example of where we need to empower the individual voice over the collective will, is in the sad practice of initiation rituals in our residences. My views on initiation at this university are a matter of public record. I am totally and unequivocally opposed to any practices where newcomers are abused, humiliated or coerced into submission, in the name of something called the "koshuisgees". I am committed to a process of eradicating such practices from our campus. I am pleased to say that such a process is already under way. It is easy enough to put a ban on initiation – indeed, such a ban has been in place at this university for years now. But we must do more. We must change an institutional culture that has condoned such practices. We must change the mindset of those who desire to perpetrate such practices, as well as the mindset of those who desire to submit. We must oppose the culture of silence. And we must empower those who have the courage to just say No.

In this regard I would like to tell you about a student matter that has come to my attention. Let us call the student John Smith. John Smith went through an initiation process in one of our residences. In the documentation I have seen, there is an account of how the first-years were shouted at, humiliated and, in fact, physically abused, shortly after their arrival. John Smith tells how at mealtimes the first-years could start eating only when a whistle was blown, and then they had to stop eating as soon as the whistle was blown again. He tells how there was a so-called 'disciplinary committee' in the residence, that the committee members wore distinctive clothing, and that, in the style of security police, they woke students up in the middle of the night for interrogation. At first he went along with all these practices and put up with them. But he later began to question the system. And his questions were not well received. They obliged people to think about what they were doing – and some people did not like it. And little by little John Smith became an outcast, because he dared think for himself and ask critical questions. It then came to the point where John Smith was himself summoned before the disciplinary committee, which sentenced him to a humiliating form of corporal punishment. Then John Smith found the courage simply to say, No. He stood up for what is right and against what is wrong, and he said 'I will not subject myself to humiliation'. What happened after that is not a pretty story, and it reflects badly on the University. John Smith was victimised. He was alienated from his former friends. His academic work deteriorated. Finally, he summoned up his courage and laid an official complaint. I am happy to be able to say that the University immediately took firm action against the malpractices that were brought to light. But I regret to say also that those who had harassed John Smith could not be brought to book under the University's disciplinary processes. What happened to John Smith is an

example of structural violence. Our task is to change the institutional culture so that such structural violence does not happen.

Although, in the case of John Smith, the University's processes have been concluded, I felt strongly that the human aspect of the incident had not yet been completed. I felt that the University should do something more. And I then did the following. I went to John Smith's house and sat down with him and his family, and I apologised to them. On behalf of the University I apologised to John Smith for what had been done to him in one of our residences.

I would now like to repeat and extend that apology. To all those students, present and past, who came to us in good faith, and were subjected to the structural violence of initiation ceremonies or their aftermath: on behalf of the University, I apologise. We are sorry. We will try to do better in future.

I would like to hold up John Smith to all our students here as a role model. Never, never allow anyone to mess with your mind. If you think something is wrong, say so. Do not allow peer pressure to force you into doing something you do not want to do.

We for our part will try to change the culture to such an extent that no-one will think it is fun, or good for the residence, to humiliate other people. I can say to you that initiation is not only against the rules – you know that already – but that it is also directly in conflict with the value system the University strives to uphold. Our Strategic Framework states unequivocally that:

"We must respect the differences between personal beliefs, between points of view, and between cultural forms of expression. We must strive to foster an institutional culture that is conducive to tolerance and to respect for fundamental human rights, and that creates an appropriate environment for teaching and learning and for research."

As I said, we must empower the voice of the individual. I am pleased, therefore, to **announce** that the Executive Committee of the Council of the University has approved, as a practical measure, that we should create the position of a University Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will have total independence, and full discretion, in receiving and dealing with complaints from students, parents of students, and staff. I am pleased, moreover, to announce that Professor Jaap Durand, former Vice-Rector of the University of the Western Cape, has agreed to take up this position. The post of Ombudsman will start with immediate effect, and details of how Professor Durand may be contacted will be distributed widely on campus as from tomorrow.

I also have a further announcement to make. It is an unfortunate fact that when there are instances of transgression of university rules, or instances of conflict, they are often related to the abuse of alcohol. The desirability or undesirability of alcohol being available in our university residences is therefore a matter of considerable debate. Personally I do not feel strongly on this matter either way, but I felt compelled to ask a different question, purely as a matter of risk management. The question I asked is whether the rules and conventions under which alcohol is made available in our residences are fully within the law. I asked for legal opinion on this matter, and the answer is that our current practices cannot be guaranteed to be operating within the law. I must therefore **announce** that the university has no other option but to suspend, with immediate effect, the provision of alcohol in our

residences, pending a further investigation into the matter. This is not a moral crusade of any kind. It is purely a matter of operating within the law. A formal announcement will be made tomorrow.

Let me conclude by returning to the point that I started from.

We want to be a top university. A university of excellence that is a national asset for this country, and an international role player in higher education. A university that assists in driving the knowledge economy. We would like to be a value-driven university rather than a rule-driven university. The kind of university I envisage is one where the values contained in our Strategic Framework are a living reality. An institutional culture of fairness, participation, transparency and readiness to serve. A vibrant intellectual discourse. Free to think. Eager to learn. And committed to making a contribution.

I look forward to working together with you to achieve these ideals. May it be a good and fruitful year for us all, which sees us truly launched in finding our way through our new world.

# Formality

*Tobea Brink*

(February 2002)

My husband  
comes  
down the aisle  
like a bridegroom  
whose cheeks are flushed  
with University colours.  
His beautiful hands  
restrain to his chest  
the flapping cloth  
of formal rectorship  
and his natural shyness  
of people.  
I want  
to burst  
from my chair  
and run  
in front of thousands  
to him  
and throw  
my arms around  
him  
and kiss his blushing cheeks  
and laugh  
so that everybody,  
everybody,  
may see:  
I know him  
underneath  
this academic  
heavy dressing.  
Yet I remain standing  
in a pew of composure  
amongst brides of the Rectorate.  
Until he has passed  
and all of us  
again  
sit  
down.

# Reaction

## Brink makes far-reaching changes

*Die Matie*, 13 February 2002

**MALAN RIETVELD**

In the past three weeks Stellenbosch has changed more than ever before. Since his momentous speech at the official opening of the University, the new Rector, Prof. Chris Brink, has made so many far-reaching announcements that the community is still struggling to grasp their full impact. His announcement about the need for greater diversity at the University, the suspension of residence pubs, and the implementation of his policy on initiation and orientation have unleashed a stormy debate in the media and in the Afrikaans community.

Brink set the tone with a strongly worded letter sent to the heads of residences, House Committee members, the welcoming and orientation committee, and the monitors.

In this letter he confirmed his feelings about initiation and the associated practices, and made a few surprising announcements, including that first-years may no longer be required to walk in lines on the campus.

He also states that the primary outcome of the welcoming programme must be rendering a service to the first-years. First-years everywhere also retain the right to choose whether they wish to make use of this service.

Brink's speech at the opening ceremony in particular set tongues wagging. His comments on the need for greater diversity was seen in some circles as an attack on the traditions and identity of the University.

Others labelled his views as "revolutionary" and "liberating".

It was during this same speech that Brink announced that residence pubs would be suspended as a result of legal opinion. According to this inquiry, it could not be guaranteed that the pubs were operating within the ambit of the relevant laws.

Some quarters labelled the way in which the announcement was made as reflective of an "autocratic management style".

In reaction to this Brink explained to *Die Matie* that "in [his] speech and in all [his] contacts he has always pleaded for open discussions on this and other issues."

Brink also used the opening as an opportunity to offer an historic apology to all current and past students of the University for the violations caused by initiation and associated practices.

"I want to extend this apology to all current and former students who came here and were then exposed to the structural violence of initiation practices and their consequences," Brink said.

The appointment of the first independent ombudsman, who could listen to the complaints of students and staff, was also announced at the opening.

On 5 February the Rector sent a letter to all students about his satisfaction with what he called "the first step". But he expressed concern about the fact that all senior students, who had arrived at the residences the following day, "were not necessarily sensitised to the same extent" as the House Committee members.

The monitors who were monitoring the orientation programmes at the residences had not received any complaints at the time of going to press.

Brink said to *Die Matie* that Carnival Week was a "new and special learning experience" for him. "The work and enthusiasm that went into it particularly impressed me.

"I was struck by the expertise and the competence of the Carnival Committee – and of other students responsible for the complicated logistical arrangements."

He also said that Carnival "undoubtedly" has a future at Stellenbosch and would not want to change anything about it.

The issue of the provisional suspension of the pubs and the fact that there seems to be no easy solution to this sticky problem, however, remains a sore point in the Rector's already sensitive relationship with residences and their managements.

*(With acknowledgement to Die Matie)*

# INTRODUCTION TO INAUGURAL ADDRESS

April 2002

It was in my inaugural speech, 100 days after taking up the position of Rector and Vice-Chancellor, that I first posed what became known as the four "Brink questions": Where do we come from? Where are we now? Where do we wish to be? And how do we get there? It was here that I identified the myth of paradise, where I set the goal of Stellenbosch becoming a top university in the new world, and where I advocated transformation as our vehicle towards reaching this goal.

It was also in this speech that I committed myself to a value-driven rather than a rule-driven approach, and asked that we should give our loyalty to the greater whole, rather than any part we may happen to be situated in. My strongest recollection, however, is of expressing the hope, as exemplified in the prayer of Sir Francis Drake, that we will not lapse into complacency, but will always strive for renewal and improvement.

My view was, and is, that transformation does not involve new people being assimilated into a current paradigm, but current people opening themselves up to a new paradigm. Inevitably, therefore, transformation was a bumpy road. However, when I look back now over the past five years, I have a sense of satisfaction that the agenda of renewal itself became part of the change of consciousness, and that renewal and improvement went hand in hand.



# Inaugural address

10 April 2002

I am glad to be standing here today. Glad, because it is the symbolic beginning of an opportunity to make a contribution to the future of higher education in South Africa. And glad to be able to do that here, at this particular university, where I began my first tenured academic position twenty-four years ago.

Today I would like to talk mainly about the future of the University of Stellenbosch. But of course the future cannot be separated from the present and the past. And so I am going to pose four questions and attempt to answer them.

- Where do we come from?
- Where are we now?
- Where do we wish to be?
- How do we get there?

## Where do we come from?

*We come from a long way back.* As a university, Stellenbosch celebrated its 84th birthday last week on 2 April. As an educational institution it goes back, through the time of what was then called the Victoria College, to the middle of the 19th century. In any country, for any university, this is a respectable age. In this country, and at this university, it is a remarkable history of growth in identity, in expertise, and in reputation.

It is necessary that we should understand this history, to be able to know where we come from. Keep in mind, for example, that we grew out of the church, before we became involved in science. Keep in mind that we were English, before we became Afrikaans. And, thirdly, keep in mind that a large part of the intellectual world in which we lived in the previous century was closely linked to a particular manner of thinking. I call this the world of 'or'.

Most of us at the university have our roots in the time and world of 'or'. In this world we easily and conveniently categorised, or even stereotyped, people, ideas and actions as either this or that. Everything was, in a manner of speaking, white or black. You were Afrikaans or English, a Matie or a Tukkier, a mathematician or a philosopher, from the town or from the campus. Things were right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly. On any issue you were for or against; in any environment you were one of us or one of them.

In this world of 'or', where we came from, decision-making was easy, almost automatic, because everything looked so well-defined. We found certainties and laid to rest our uncertainties, in academia just as in ordinary life, by drawing boundaries, making rules, building walls, and by expecting everyone to stay within the boundaries we had drawn for them.

## Where are we now?

*We are now, at this very instant, in a moment of transition.* The world we have come from has left us many assets, and a great deal to be proud of. The University of Stellenbosch is undeniably a good university. We attract school-leavers who have achieved the best results in the country. The skills base of our researchers makes us the top achievers in respect of interaction with industry. Our new Institute for Advanced Study is the first of its kind in Africa. We have an excellent infrastructure, and a natural environment unrivalled anywhere in the world. We have stability. We have the extraordinarily deep-seated loyalty of our staff, and tens of thousands of alumni.

These are great treasures, and we should be thoroughly aware of their value. Stellenbosch is unique – so people tell me. In fact, this is the one single phrase I have heard the most since I took up my position as rector 100 days ago – ‘Stellenbosch is unique’. Here, it is said, things are still orderly. Of good quality. Everything works. Everything is in place. Everything is fine.

But in that, itself, lies the danger. The danger is that we will slip into a comfortable metaphor of Stellenbosch as a small secluded paradise, behind the mountain range of our implicit assumptions, distant from the new world around us. The danger is that we will think of ourselves as the gatekeepers of paradise. The danger is that we will only open the gates, every now and then, ever so slightly, to let a few people in, on the assumption that they should then again close the gate behind them.

This is not a sustainable strategy. It is not sustainable because we have no legal or moral claim to property rights in paradise. It is not sustainable because it attempts to perpetuate a world that has passed – the world of the dichotomy of “either-or”. At best, withdrawal from the new world is a holding pattern, a waiting game. And it is because we recognise this fact that we know we are in a moment of transition.

## Where do we wish to be?

*We wish to be a top university in the new world.* We wish to be internationally esteemed, and to play a leading role at the national and regional level. We would like the name ‘Stellenbosch’ to feature prominently in the annals of higher education.

This cannot be achieved from within the world of ‘or’. You cannot play a leading role in a complex situation where your choices are always limited to one of two. The new world we must enter and in which we wish to play a leading role, is a world of ‘and’. In our country we are white and black, and many shades in between. We speak Afrikaans and English, and then also nine other languages. Many of us are Maties and Tukkies, not to mention Ikeys or UWCers. We move about in the town and on the campus. You can be a mathematician and a philosopher. We tackle problems from an interdisciplinary perspective. We do not deal only with questions of right or wrong, but also with questions of right and wrong. In the new world there are many different kinds of “us”. The new Stellenbosch we wish to serve consists of Mostertsdrif and Kayamandi, the Boord and the Vlei.

What then, in this new world, can we make of the statement ‘Stellenbosch is unique’? We say yes, Stellenbosch is unique – but as a national asset, not as a gem to be kept hidden behind the mountains. Stellenbosch is unique in the contribution it can make to this country, on the basis of its the many

strengths and excellent qualities. Unique in what it can do for higher education in Afrikaans. Unique in the quality of the service it can render to the community. Like friendship, a national asset will grow only when it is shared.

### **How do we get there?**

*We must use renewal as our vehicle.* History shows that this will not be the first time that Stellenbosch undergoes renewal. We can do it again.

The very first thing we must do is recognise the multiplicity of opportunities around us. Things are not only white or black, not even only shades of grey. In the new world there is a rainbow of opportunities waiting for us - if only we can see it.

Secondly - and from this many practical measures can follow - we must make it our task to bring together from the spectrum of possibilities exactly those which are thought to be contradictory. It is precisely in the juxtaposition of the unexpected that we can make the breakthrough into the new world. We can promote Afrikaans and diversity together. We can admit more black students, and improve our outcomes standard. We can encourage the creation and the application of knowledge simultaneously. We can renew, and acknowledge tradition. We can have excellence and equity. We can pursue knowledge and outcomes. We can be effective and efficient. We can lead and serve.

Thirdly, in the new world we must give our loyalty to the greater whole, not only to the specific part in which we may find ourselves. We are not only of the University, we are people of Stellenbosch. We are not only people of Stellenbosch, we are South Africans. We are not only South Africans, we are Africans. We are not only mathematicians or philosophers or doctors or jurists - we are, I hope, all thinkers.

Fourthly, we must try to be value-driven, rather than rule-driven. The characteristic of a rule is precisely that it comes from the world of 'or'. It is yes-or-no, per item in the rule book, without it really being clear what the aim of the rules is, or how we are supposed to deal with the yes-and-noes we encounter every day. For instance, we say drunkenness is against the rules, but we neglect to say that it is undignified.

We must never forget that our task as a university is to pursue knowledge, to strive for understanding, and to hope for wisdom. Beyond the simplicities of yes-or-no, across the boundaries of our disciplines, on the other side of the mountains, there is a diffuse and demanding world where we can make a contribution, act within our value system, and strive for excellence by engaging with complexity. To return to the earlier metaphor of Stellenbosch as a small paradise: our job is to open the gates of paradise, not only so that those on the outside can come in, but also so that those on the inside can venture out. Let us not be prisoners in paradise.

Because this is a special occasion, and because we are gathered together today in a church, I would like, by way of summary, to read you a prayer. It is a prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake - the man who defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, and in so doing probably changed the course of history.

The prayer of Sir Francis Drake is a little unusual, in that it does not pray for grace or favour, mercy or salvation. Instead, it asks the Lord, when necessary, to disturb us. And it goes like this.

*Disturb us, Lord, when  
We are too well pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed so close to the shore.*

*Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.*

*Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wider seas  
Where storms will show your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.*

*We ask you to push back  
The horizons of our hopes  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.*

I pray that the horizons of our hope may constantly expand. I pray that we will work for that which we hope for, rather than against which we fear. I pray that Stellenbosch will take up its rightful position in the mainstream of development in this country, and that it will be seen as a beacon of excellence, here and in the rest of the world.

In conclusion, allow me a few personal words of thanks. I give thanks in all sincerity to God for disturbing my life whenever it was necessary. Thank you to my mother and my late father who brought me up. It has been a long road to this podium from the dust of number 3 Wildebees Street, Upington – but the values burnt into me by the Kalahari sun have remained steadfast all the way. Thank you to my dear wife, Tobeia, who knows when to support, when to tolerate, and when to disturb. Thank you to my daughter Carmen for all the lessons I have learnt from her. And thank you to our two youngest children who show me every day that work is not the only thing that is important.

Finally, I would like to thank our university's philosophers, in whose philosophy café I got the idea of the world of 'or' and the world of 'and'. And, finally, thank you very much to every one of you here for coming to share with me and the University the inauguration of its seventh rector.

# INTRODUCTION TO POSITION OF RECTORS OF THE HAUs ON AFRIKAANS

September 2002

The document which follows was a joint position paper of the vice-chancellors of the five Historically Afrikaans Universities (HAUs) in September 2002. I initiated the idea of publishing such a position paper, and wrote the first draft, after which all six of us (including one Vice-Chancellor-elect) got together and finalised the document. It was subsequently published on the front page of *Rapport* [the Afrikaans Sunday newspaper], and we also sent a copy to the Minister of Education.

I would not want to change one word of this document today, and I am glad that we placed our views on record at that time. It shows a prescient insight into two dangers, both of which subsequently materialised. One of these dangers was an excessive focus by the *taalstryders* ("language warriors") on universities, more than on any one of dozens of other issues which merit attention in the promotion of Afrikaans. The other danger was an equally excessive focus on Stellenbosch University as the target for implementing an identity-driven model of an Afrikaans university.

To me this short position paper is an excellent example of how saying something in public differs from being heard. In 2002 our views did not elicit much reaction, and nothing particularly negative. Years later, however, some of the principles enunciated in this document were at the heart of the *taaldebat*. Thus, for example, the idea that the primary function of a university centres on knowledge – hence not on identity – became a major point of contestation, as I point out in my contribution titled "What is an Afrikaans university?"

# Position of Rectors of the HAUs on Afrikaans

24 September 2002

- We believe that the primary task of a university revolves around knowledge: the creation of knowledge, dissemination of knowledge, and application of knowledge, within the broad context of social involvement.
- We see Afrikaans as a national asset. As such, and as with the other official languages, the interests of Afrikaans are a shared responsibility of the broad South African community, not only that of universities.
- As Historically Afrikaans Universities we are individually and collectively committed to retain and promote Afrikaans as a university language. This cannot and should not be the responsibility of only some of the HAUs.
- We believe that Afrikaans can serve as an instrument for empowerment of a large section of the disadvantaged groups of our country.
- We acknowledge the realities of a multilingual society and university environment, and reflect these in the practicalities of language policy on our campuses. We take seriously our responsibility to deliver graduates that are well prepared for the world of work, nationally and internationally.
- Within a multilingual context, there is room for different strategies and models for the retention and promotion of Afrikaans as medium of instruction at university. Depending on the context and environment of a university, this includes the use of Afrikaans as primary medium of instruction, as well as dual- and parallel medium instruction.
- We will continue to serve the interests of Afrikaans in our various ways, each in accordance with policy determined by the specific university senate and council, and in this regard we commit ourselves to dialogue and cooperation within the Higher Education sector.

**Roux Botha, RAU**

**Chris Brink, Stellenbosch University**

**Stef Coetzee en Frederick Fourie, University of the Free State**

**Theuns Eloff, PU for CHE**

**Calie Pistorius, University of Pretoria**

# INTRODUCTION TO TRADITION AND RENEWAL, AND THE FUTURE OF STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

November 2002

By the end of 2002 we were well advanced with the formulation of a language policy for the University, and there was also considerable discussion of the matter in the Afrikaans press. I was the invited speaker at the annual general meeting of Convocation that November, and wove my speech around this matter.

On re-reading the speech, what strikes me is the commitment to Afrikaans, and the intention of finding a realistic way forward without repeating the mistakes of the past. It was only later that I realized the difference between what I thought I had said, and what the *taalstryders* "language warriors" thought they had heard. What stood out for them was that they thought they had heard the Rector promise to ensure their protection against the ghost called the "English veto".

What is the "English veto"? It is the conviction that when an English-speaking student asks for an explanation or repetition of a point in English, in an Afrikaans-medium class, then that student is somehow exercising a veto over the use of Afrikaans in that class. On this matter I had already given my opinion in 2001, even before coming to Stellenbosch, in an interview with Lizette Rabe for the Afrikaans magazine *Insig*: "In a classroom where some students cannot follow an explanation in Afrikaans, and ask for some repetition in English, the lecturer has the responsibility to accommodate the student". The matter seemed to me fairly straightforward: the student cannot exercise any power of veto, but the lecturer should exercise a pedagogical responsibility. And that is what I said in my speech to Convocation: "There is no such power of veto. ... What one can say, however, is that this hypothetical student, like any other student, is entitled to a reasonable expectation that his or her learning experience will be maximally supported."

What many people thought they had heard, however, is an undertaking that there will be rules and regulations to ensure that English will not be tolerated in Afrikaans classes. Much of the unpleasantness that later came out in the "debate" regarding the T-option resulted from this conviction.

# Tradition and renewal, and the future of Stellenbosch University

## Speech at the meeting of Convocation

14 November 2002

### Introduction

This evening I am going to speak quite directly about tradition and renewal – not in general about institutional traditions such as those found in residences, or in sport, or in Carnival, but specifically about tradition and renewal in the context of Afrikaans as medium of instruction at Stellenbosch University

However, I would like to begin by making one general observation, and that is the following:

Renewal is a tradition at Stellenbosch.

Our Strategic Framework states unequivocally "The University commits itself to an open, broad process of self-scrutiny and self-renewal". I want to add that this is not a new idea. The University has in the past repeatedly demonstrated its capacity for self-renewal. Think, for instance, of the very deliberate decision two decades ago to expand our research portfolio. Or, before that, think of the founding of the Medical Faculty, and the Faculty of Engineering. Or, to go back right to the beginning, think of the founding of the University itself, in 1918.

In this regard I recently came across a very interesting book called "Gedenkboek van het Victoria Kollege" [Commemorative Book of Victoria College], published by the Union of Former Students (in other words, the Convocation!) and produced by Nasionale Pers in 1918. It contains articles in three languages: Dutch, Afrikaans and English. Some of the articles are retrospective, with subjects such as "Stellenbosch in den Ouden Tijd" [Stellenbosch in the Old Days], "Herinneringen uit het Studenten-Leven" [Remembrances from Student Life], and "Reminiscences 1875-1879". Others look to the future, for instance "De Afrikaner en de Universiteit" [The Afrikaner and the University], and "Die Nuwe Stellenbosch" [The New Stellenbosch]. Here is a quotation<sup>1</sup> from the latter:

*Die nuwe Stellenbosch sal 'n rol hê om te speel in Suidafrika. ... Stellenbosch het nie die universiteit geword vir die Westelike Provinsie nie. ... Stellenbosch is [dus ook] nie 'n hoëskool vir Kaapland alleen nie. Dit moet 'n veel groter rol speel: dit moet die Afrikaans-Hollandse Hoëskool vir Suidafrika word...*

[The new Stellenbosch will have a role to play in South Africa. ... Stellenbosch has not become the university for the Western Cape ... Stellenbosch is [therefore also] not a university for the Cape only. It must play a much bigger role: it must become the Afrikaans-Dutch University for South Africa ...]

And this in 1918!



## Historical observations

For the University there are a number of interesting resemblances between 1918 and now. The year 1918 was eight years after the founding of the Union of South Africa – which was then seen as the “new South Africa”. One can say it was a time of reflection and decision-making for the Afrikaners of that time. It was only a short while since they had lost political power in the two Boer Republics. There was a marked fear of British imperialism, and the phasing out of Afrikaans and Afrikaans cultural assets. The restructuring of higher education was an issue of the day, and various commissions were appointed for this purpose. One definite idea was the merging of higher education institutions.

This all sounds very familiar. Here we are now in 2002 – eight years after the establishment of a “new South Africa”. The white Afrikaners only quite recently lost political power in the Republic of South Africa. There is a marked fear of the effect of globalisation, and of the phasing out of Afrikaans and Afrikaans cultural assets. The issue of restructuring higher education is being hotly debated – and there have been a number of national commissions in this regard. The possible merging of universities and technikons is very much the order of the day.

Here we are, faced once again with the question: “What is the future of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University” – just as the question was asked in 1918, and under circumstances that are strongly reminiscent of those times<sup>2</sup>. How the story unfolded at that time is well known. Stellenbosch was founded as an act of faith, with a commitment to Afrikaans. For many people this was symbolised by Oom Jannie Marais’ legacy of 1915: £100,000 so that Afrikaans at Stellenbosch “geen mindere plaats dan de andere officiele landstaal zal innemen” [will occupy no lesser place than the other official language].<sup>3</sup> The fund that was subsequently established was used, for instance, to pay 25% of the salaries of certain professors, provided at least half of their lectures were given in Dutch or Afrikaans.

In the context of these similarities between 1918 and 2002 I would like to pose a few questions and then address them.

### Questions we must answer about Afrikaans at Stellenbosch:

- What *do* we wish to do? – And what do we *not* wish to do?  
(In other words, what are our intentions?)
- What *can* we do? – And what can we *not* do?  
(In other words, what are our options?)
- What *must* we do? – And what must we *not* do?  
(In other words, what are the constraints of the situation?)
- What are we *going* to do? – And what are we *not* going to do?  
(In other words, what are our plans?)

**What do we wish to do? And what do we not wish to do?** (In other words, what are our intentions?)

The question as to what we wish to do, has a very simple answer:

We wish to retain our commitment to Afrikaans.

We want Stellenbosch to remain the "Afrikaans (-language) University for South Africa". We want to ensure, as was envisaged in 1918, that Afrikaans "will occupy no lesser place" than English at Stellenbosch. Of this intention I can give you our assurance. During the process of my appointment I had already formulated a Language Vision for Stellenbosch, entitled "Finding our way in the new world".<sup>4</sup> My principal idea in this vision was, and still is, the growth and progress of Afrikaans, and the central role that Stellenbosch can play in that process.

To the question of what we do *not* wish to do, I would like to give two answers. First, we definitely do not want to find ourselves on a "slippery slope" of "englishification" (*verengelsing*). Apart from any convictions we might have about the role and future of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch, it is simply unacceptable for any well-managed organisation to be on a slippery slope of any kind. The second point is that we definitely do not want to see Afrikaans linked to skin colour. When we say that we commit ourselves to Afrikaans, we are not saying that we have any preference for the traditional concept of white Afrikanerdom. On the contrary: we must do exactly the opposite, as I will soon explain.

In summary: The issue is not *whether* Stellenbosch wants to be Afrikaans. Of course we do. The issue, rather, is *how*.

#### **What can we do? And what can we not do? (In other words, what are our options?)**

What we can do is to think level-headedly and strategically about how Afrikaans can make progress. (By the way, I think it is unfortunate that many of the participants of the language debate have such low expectations for Afrikaans. Many are concerned only with survival. For me it is about more than just survival. It is about growth and progress.) Here are some ideas about what we can do.

Firstly, we can turn the starting point of the debate around. Rather than starting with the idea that Afrikaans-medium instruction at universities is a problem, as is sometimes the case, we can start by seeing Afrikaans as an opportunity. More specifically: we can present Afrikaans as an instrument for empowerment. The demographics show that there are a significant number of black and coloured students who have Afrikaans as their first or second language, and who can therefore derive benefit from instruction in Afrikaans. More specifically: it appears that there are large numbers of *poor* students who can best be helped in Afrikaans. We would very much like to be the university that offers such an opportunity to these students. We want to use Afrikaans to prepare students in such a way that they will be able to take their rightful place in the global community.

Secondly, we can see our choice of language of instruction as one way in which we differentiate ourselves from other universities. Our Strategic Framework states very clearly that our main activity is centred on knowledge and excellence. But it is only realistic to acknowledge that the same applies to many other universities. After we have thus stated what makes us the same, we must also be able to say what makes *us* different. How do you differentiate your own university from other universities? Well, a very natural way in which we can differentiate our own university is by saying: "We are the university that teaches in Afrikaans". It is part of our region, it is part of our history, and it is part of our strategic goal. I might add that differentiation is one of the things expected of us by the National

Plan for Higher Education. The plan and the preceding White Paper clearly express the sentiment that universities must find niche areas within the national system of higher education<sup>5</sup>. In fairness I must add that this differentiation mechanism in the National Plan is seen first and foremost in terms of research and teaching programmes offered. But it is precisely this that leads to the third idea of what we can do.

As envisaged in our Strategic Framework, we are currently in the process of defining our academic niche areas. These are the broad areas of focus that we want to expand as our specific domains of excellence. Typically such focus areas will extend across disciplinary boundaries and involve several departments and faculties. To give an example, it is evident that we are very strong in the area of biotechnology applied to agriculture, and it is therefore likely that we will want to define an area of focus in terms of agribiotechnology. With this concept of a focus area comes the idea that we could identify *language* as an area of focus. It is evident that we have a great deal of expertise in the field of language. We have a number of strong language departments. We have linguists, literary experts, sociolinguists and language technologists. We are home to the "*Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*" [Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language], and we have an impressive collection of Africana. We play a leading role in an extensive Innovation Fund project on language technology – in which, incidentally, we make the technology applicable to (other) African languages. In this way, by developing language as a focus area of the University, we now have the interesting opportunity of becoming the forerunners in the study of multilingualism in South Africa. And in such a context Afrikaans can become a model of what can be done with and what can be achieved through an indigenous language.

Let me continue with my list of questions. After we have asked what we *can* do, we must, to maintain a balance, ask what we *not* do. And here, to be honest, there is not very much to say. The fact is that under the Constitution there is really very little that we *not* do. And that by itself says a great deal. There are really few options that are not available to us. There are very few "cannots". But, from a strategic point of view, it is clear that there are quite a few "should nots". I therefore move on to the third of my four questions.

**What must we do? And what must we not do?** (In other words, what are the constraints?)

The most important thing we must *not* do, I believe, is to try and protect Afrikaans by isolating it. To put it more strongly, we must not commit language apartheid. Any demand that we should lecture *only* in Afrikaans at Stellenbosch is, I believe, both strategically and educationally unwise. It is necessary that we accept the challenge of using Afrikaans alongside English – and alongside Xhosa as well. As I said in my Language Vision document, I believe that Afrikaans will grow and progress at best when continuously meeting new challenges. I believe the fact that we now have some more hills to climb, will keep the language lean and fit. And I venture to say that the language debate of the past few months has actually helped in this process.

And what is it that we *must* do? I think that in general the most important thing is that we must try to learn from history, so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. In the context of this evening, where we are talking about tradition and renewal, for me this means that we should not only ask what is *the same* now as in 1918. We should also ask what is *different* now from 1918.

As far as I can see, there are two important differences between now and 1918. The one is the constitutional status of Afrikaans. In 1918 Afrikaans was not even an official language – this in itself was a goal still to be achieved (a goal that was achieved only in 1925). Now, in 2002, Afrikaans is officially entrenched in the Constitution as one of our national languages. It is acknowledged by the government as a national asset. We now have a national language policy framework that allows room for the strategy of using Afrikaans as a primary medium of instruction. And built into this framework is a commitment to negotiating on the implementation of this strategy. In all these respects our situation is much more favourable than in 1918.

The second difference between 1918 and 2002 is, I believe, the unfortunate reality that between 1918 and 2002 lies the historical mistake of apartheid. We cannot now pretend that it never happened, and we cannot pretend that we were not a part of it. One consequence of apartheid is that Afrikaans is now burdened with a legacy of mistrust amongst many of our fellow citizens, and we cannot ignore this. I regret to say that, as far as Afrikaans is concerned, the sins of the fathers are being visited on the children. The fact is that there is still suspicion that the promotion of Afrikaans is nothing more than a cover-up for the promotion of white Afrikanerdom. This suspicion is a reality that we must live with and a reality we will gradually have to overcome by building a new relationship of trust. And to achieve this, there are two further things we must do here in Stellenbosch.

Firstly, within the context of Afrikaans we must rapidly change our colour and diversity profile. (I hope I can claim that at management level we have already made significant progress.) There is a very strong argument that Stellenbosch must remain Afrikaans because most people in the Western Cape are Afrikaans. Fair enough. But most people in the Western Cape are also not white. And where are the coloured and black people this evening? How many members of the Convocation are coloured and black? Looking at the faces in front of me, it is crystal clear what our historical backlog is: we do not at present have the necessary numbers of coloured and black people who are competent in Afrikaans to support our claim that the use and promotion of Afrikaans extend across colour boundaries. This is something we will have to prove. And to prove this, the trust in our intentions will have to be stronger than the evidence from our past.

This will not happen while mistrust is the order of the day. Therefore – and this is my second point in this regard – we will have to lower our arrogance by a few degrees. (This point about arrogance is, by the way, a quote from a speech by a well-known Afrikaner business leader.)<sup>6</sup> It is not sufficient to say, “our doors are open”. It is in fact arrogant to say this without considering that people might not *want* to enter our front door because they do not find our entrance hall friendly and welcoming. And we now know, from a survey we conducted this year of the perceptions of coloured students on our campus, that there is a disturbing message of two cultures. Coloured students are, for instance, predominantly more negative than white students about the integration of coloured students at Stellenbosch University.<sup>7</sup>

**What are we going to do? And what are we not going to do?** (In other words, what are our plans?)

As you know, the University is currently in the process of reviewing its language policy, and of drawing up a language plan. Since the beginning of this year we have walked a long way down this road. We

have carried out a language audit on Afrikaans as medium of instruction, from which we learnt a great deal. We investigated the position of scientific publications in Afrikaans. We established an independent task group to review our language policy and to draw up a language plan for us. We conducted a public debate on the status and future of Afrikaans. Everyone had the opportunity to speak his or her mind, and everyone was heard. The latest version of the policy and plan was submitted by the task group to the Rectorate on 12 November, and the proposals have since been published on the University's web site.<sup>8</sup> Articles also already appeared this morning in the newspapers. I can tell you that the proposals were recently tabled before a discussion forum of the University Council, where they were discussed in depth.

This is not the occasion to give detailed comments on the policy and plans. But I would like to mention and explain just one aspect. After everything has been said about tradition and renewal, about our socio-political environment, and about Afrikaans as medium of instruction, we are still faced with a *practical* issue. I have repeatedly said that the issue of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch is not so much a problem that has to be solved, but an issue to be managed. It is this practical management aspect that I would like to illustrate with a few examples of questions that have by now achieved virtually iconic status.

The first example is the one which, if I remember correctly, led to the start of the present debate early this year. In a class of, say, 40 students, there are one or two who are English-speaking, the rest are Afrikaans-speaking. The lecture is in Afrikaans. During the lecture one of the English-speaking students puts up his hand and says, "I'm sorry, I can't follow that. Could you repeat it in English?" What should the lecturer do? More generally: does an English-speaking student have the power of veto over Afrikaans in the classroom?

The answer is no. There is no such power of veto. What there should be, I believe (acknowledging that we have not yet reached such a stage), is a code of conduct to which lecturers and students, as well as the University as a whole, are committed. The University has the responsibility to make known beforehand what the medium of instruction will be for a particular module or course. Students then enrol knowing full well what they are letting themselves in for, as far as language is concerned. Once they have made an informed decision, students cannot then make further demands in respect of the language to be used. However, the hypothetical student mentioned above, like any other student, might reasonably expect that his or her learning experience will be optimally facilitated. Explaining a concept for a second or even a third time is nothing unusual for an experienced lecturer. (Ask anyone who has lectured on mathematics.) If you as a lecturer need to explain the same concept again, there can be no loss, there will very likely be some gain for everyone, in giving the second explanation in English. But, as I have said, that is *part of* the learning process, not a veto *over* the medium of instruction.

A second iconic question is, "Is the university going to introduce parallel medium instruction, yes or no?" The answer is, "No, we are not planning to introduce parallel medium instruction as the norm." The path of complete parallel medium instruction throughout the institution, has already been followed by other historically Afrikaans universities. We do not intend taking the same route. What we

do intend is to use double or parallel medium instruction as and when necessary, in accordance with our own decisions and goals.

A third and last iconic question: "Where does the decision-making authority lie?" As you will read in the language plan that has now been published, the idea is that at the undergraduate level Afrikaans will be *the default* medium of instruction. This means that, unless otherwise motivated and decided, undergraduate courses will automatically be presented in Afrikaans. We do recognise the possibility that a specific department or faculty might, for strategic reasons, want to deviate from this default position – the examples of Military Science and Forestry are now well known. But it must then be motivated why this is necessary. The idea is that decision-making in this regard will be exercised by a central Language Committee of the University that reports to Council. There is thus no devolution of decision-making on language options.

## Conclusion

I have spoken at some length, because I feel that the matter of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch deserves serious attention before the Convocation. Here are a few concluding remarks.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Task Group. They carried out an extremely delicate task with integrity, and expertise and independently. I would like to emphasise the last point. The task group was and is not under the Rector's orders. They were in fact requested to apply their minds to it independently, and then to submit their best proposals to the University and to the community. And that is what they did. Unfortunately they cannot go home and relax yet, since the decision-making processes will only be completed in December.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Convocation, and more generally to everyone who participated in the language debate. I believe the debate was necessary, and that it was good for us. I think we learn more when we differ from one another than when we agree with one another.

In 1905, Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr asked a very simple question here in Stellenbosch about Afrikaans: "Is dit ons erns?" [Are we serious about it?] The countrywide participation in the language debate, the attention at government level, the work of the university on the matter, your attendance here this evening at the largest Convocation gathering yet – all these things tell me that we can now, after nearly one hundred years, still say with conviction: "Yes, we *are* serious about it."

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Dr JFW Grosskopf, "Die Nuwe Stellenbosch", from *Gedenkboek van het Victoria-Kollege (uitgegeven op last van de Unie van Oudstudenten)*, De Nationale Pers Beperkt, Cape Town 1918.
- <sup>2</sup> I owe this point to Prof. Hermann Giliomee. I also thank Prof. Giliomee for the loan of his copy of the *Gedenkboek van het Victoria-Kollege*.
- <sup>3</sup> The will of JH Marais. Available at the Corporate Affairs Division, Stellenbosch University,
- <sup>4</sup> Available on my web site. [www.sun.ac.za/rector](http://www.sun.ac.za/rector).
- <sup>5</sup> One of the goals of the NPHE (par. 1.7) is: "To ensure diversity in the organisational form and institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and programme differentiation, thus enabling the addressing of regional and national needs in social and economic development". According to the preceding White Paper: "An important task in planning and managing a single national co-ordinated system is to ensure diversity in its organisational form and in the institutional landscape, and offset pressures for homogenisation."
- <sup>6</sup> Ton Vosloo, in a speech at a dinner of the "Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings" [Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies] at which he received a medal of honour for service to his country, as reported in *Die Burger*, 21 September 2002.
- <sup>7</sup> Johann Mouton and Maryke Hunter: "'n Ondersoek na die inskakeling van bruin studente aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch: 'n geval van twee kulture?'" Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, Stellenbosch University, February 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> See [www.sun.ac.za/taal](http://www.sun.ac.za/taal).

# INTRODUCTION TO QUALITY NEEDS DIVERSITY

January 2003

I believe that a diversity of people and ideas has inherent educational value. More specifically, as I have said repeatedly in public forums, I believe that Stellenbosch needs more diversity to be a better university. The speech that follows was devoted to this theme. I delivered it at the centenary celebrations of the Rhodes Trust in 2003, before an audience of hundreds of former Rhodes scholars. It must have made an impression, because three years later, when I attended the annual general conference of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, I found myself quoted by name on this theme in the official annual report.

As a footnote regarding local reaction to the speech I should point out that there is a difference between necessary conditions and sufficient conditions. I am not saying that quality is sufficient for diversity. In other words, I am not saying that if Stellenbosch were to become more diverse, it would be a better university. There are many other things that also need to be done. What I do say is that diversity is necessary for quality. In other words, if Stellenbosch does not become more diverse, it will not be able to achieve academic excellence. I also spell out this idea in my contribution "What is an Afrikaans university?".



# Quality needs Diversity

## Address delivered at the Rhodes Trust Centenary Reunion

29 January 2003

I quote from the very elegant brochure for your conference, where it mentions your visits to the three universities in the Western Cape:

The role of major research universities ... will be addressed by the Vice-Chancellors. ... These universities had very different histories during the apartheid years, but all are now at the forefront of the building of the new democratic order.

Let me start by saying something about the new democratic order. It was only one month ago that the governing party of South Africa, the African National Congress, held their 51st conference here in Stellenbosch. The opening session, and the plenary sessions, were held in this very hall. This hall is called the DF Malan Hall – it is named after that same DF Malan who was the first prime minister of the apartheid era – the man who won the election in 1948 which General Jan Smuts lost.

For one week, literally thousands of black South Africans, decision-makers all, congregated on our campus. They stayed in the residences, used the venues and facilities, interacted with the staff, and generally made the place their own. Nothing like that has happened at Stellenbosch before. Stellenbosch got to know more black people, and more black people got to know Stellenbosch, than ever before, in this short period of time. We broke down many barriers, demolished many stereotypes, and developed a much better understanding of each other. The symbolic impact of this event was enormous. The country sat up and took notice. The headline in the Sunday newspaper said: "ANC welcomed in the heart of Afrikanerdom". The irony of the situation was widely appreciated, and enjoyed. I believe that the ANC conference taking place in Stellenbosch was, and was seen to be, a contribution to nation-building.

I started with this story to illustrate that things are changing in Stellenbosch. There is a new energy here, which takes account of where we come from, and works it into our planning for the future. But before I get to that, I would like to talk about the past for a while. As your brochure says, the three Western Cape universities had very different histories during the apartheid years. I leave it to my counterparts at UCT and UWC to talk about their respective institutions, but even a cursory interest in the subject would show up some of these differences. UCT: a historically white English liberal institution, on land donated by Cecil John Rhodes himself, and steeped initially in the tradition of imperialism. UWC: started as part of the grand plan of apartheid, transformed into a "Struggle University" by staking out its claim as the intellectual home of the left, and now the *alma mater* of many of the new leadership of this country.

And then there is Stellenbosch. One hundred years ago, Stellenbosch was still called the Victoria College. It was founded as a theological seminary in the 1850s, in this town founded by the Dutch

Governor Simon van der Stel in the 1680s. Briefly, the story of how the Victoria College was transformed into Stellenbosch University is as follows.

You may recall that the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910. At that time, the Union was what may be called "the new South Africa". In this new South Africa, the Afrikaners had lost the political power they held in the Boer republics, and were understandably wondering what their role would and could be in the new dispensation. The Afrikaans language became the focus point for defining their role – and Stellenbosch was then already the heartland of the Afrikaans language. As the Afrikaans language movement grew, the role of Stellenbosch became more and more important.

Then, in the aftermath of the Union, came a national restructuring of Higher Education. Part of this restructuring was the proposal that the Victoria College should be merged with the South African College, and that this merged institution would be an English-language university, to be known as the University of Cape Town. That was the catalyst. In 1918, in a remarkable act of bold decision-making, Stellenbosch staked out its future as an Afrikaans-language independent university. This decision was made financially viable by a bequest of £100,000 in the will of a man called Oom Jannie Marais. If you walk on our campus you will see on the central square a statue of Jannie Marais. The inscription on the statue says simply: "Our benefactor".

You can see from this that we too, in the early days, had our struggle period. Here is a little anecdote you may appreciate. One of the first Rhodes scholarships ever was awarded to a Stellenbosch student in 1903, one Tobie Muller. But Muller actually declined the honour, on the grounds of conscientious objection. He was strongly opposed to the ideals espoused by Rhodes, and refused to participate in a scheme designed (as Rhodes himself put it) "to maintain the Imperial thought".

The struggle part of our history deserves its fair share of attention. But the fact is that Stellenbosch University is not best known for its legitimate early struggle. Stellenbosch is rather better known for a later period, in times you may be more familiar with. The pendulum swung the other way, and Stellenbosch became closely associated with Afrikaner nationalism and the ideology of apartheid. I have mentioned DF Malan – he had his home in Stellenbosch. The name of HF Verwoerd will be familiar to you – he was a professor of sociology at Stellenbosch university before turning to politics. The Afrikaner Broederbond, the secret organisation behind the National Party, was a dominant presence on the campus of Stellenbosch University. And, as is well known, during this time Afrikaans became a political tool for wielding power. It must be confessed that during this time Stellenbosch, the archetypal Afrikaans university, did not raise a strong voice of protest against the abuse of the language as a political instrument.

And now, much more recently, the pendulum has swung yet again. In fact, there are some quite remarkable similarities between the situation in Stellenbosch now, and at the time of its founding in 1918. When I took up office last year, it was 8 years after the founding of "the new South Africa" – as was the case in 1918. It is clear that the Afrikaners lost political power in 1994 – as they did a hundred years ago. There was a big public debate last year about the role of Afrikaans in the future of the country – as there was in 1918. And now, as then, there is a mighty re-engineering of Higher

Education under way, with all sorts of institutional mergers being proposed. I mention these things just to make the point that now, as then, it was decision-making time.

And this is what we decided:

- We want to be a top-class university
- We want to be a role-player in nation-building
- We want to increase diversity, and decrease homogeneity.

I will make a few short comments on the first two points, and then talk at some more length about the third one.

I am proud to say that we can legitimately lay claim to a number of areas of excellence at our university. When I have finished speaking my colleague Professor Lategan will expand on this point by talking about our Institute of Advanced Studies. But there are other examples. We have, for example, far and away the best track record in South Africa in government funding for the interaction with business and industry. (I refer here to a programme called THRIP – the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme.) Also, we are quite proud of the fact that we were the first university in the Southern Hemisphere to put a microsatellite into space. On another occasion I would enjoy backing up our claim to excellence with facts and figures; here, I just want to say that quality is a commitment of ours.

On the matter of nation-building, I have already mentioned the example of the ANC conference taking place here. Evidently there is much more that we can and should be doing, and I could talk about that as well if time permitted. But I'd rather use the opportunity to make a related point. It is that in the process of creating a new South African society, this university remains of enormous symbolic significance. There is a strong body of opinion that says that if Stellenbosch cannot become part of the mainstream then the Afrikaners will not become part of the mainstream, and this would impair the whole grand experiment of building a non-racial society in this country. (Incidentally: not all Afrikaans-speakers would regard themselves as Afrikaners – this is an important point often understated in discussions on these matters.) The question of what role Stellenbosch can and will play in the new South Africa is an important one – for historical reasons, for symbolic reasons, and for practical reasons.

I now turn to diversity. In this country the word "diversity" is, understandably, often taken as a code word for black and white. And a more realistic racial mix is certainly an important example of what I have in mind. We do need more black students, and more black staff. And we have started to take steps to realise this. We are now in the process of drawing up a 5-year Diversity Plan for the campus, which will address the issue of recruiting more black staff and students, as well as the issue of institutional culture. Already we have created and filled a position called Coordinator of Diversity, and we hope to have the Plan in place by mid-year.

But diversity of black and white is not all I have in mind. My view is that Stellenbosch needs more diversity in the full sense of the word. We need more diversity in terms of colour, of gender, of religion,

of ability and disability, of sexual orientation, of geographic origin, of financial capacity – we need, in short, more diversity of those attributes common in South African society. But there is still more. We need not just a diversity of people. We need the true diversity of *ideas*.

Depending on what part of the world you come from, this may or may not sound like much. But it is a sobering fact that a significant proportion of South African society still view the idea of increased diversity with apprehension. This is also the case here – at this beautiful place, the symbolically important and historically homogeneous Stellenbosch University.

No wonder, then, that there is a ready and even pre-emptive response against the idea of increasing diversity. I call it the “yes-but” response. The “yes-but” response to the plan of increased diversity goes like this: “Yes, of course I am entirely in favour of increasing diversity. But what about standards?” What this does, is to position the concept of diversity at the outset as if it were in opposition to the concept of excellence. There is an implicit claim in the yes-but response that increasing diversity will inevitably lead to decreasing quality. And this is based on an implicit assumption that quality and diversity are conflicting concepts; that pursuing both of these is at best a balancing act, but more likely a trade-off.

To this, I say No. It is my thesis, and it is part of the strategic thinking for this university, that *quality needs diversity*. Diversity is not a hindrance or a danger to quality. Nor is it in opposition to quality. Diversity is one of the necessary conditions for quality.

I would like to give you some reasons for thinking that quality needs diversity.

*First: Diversity has an inherent educational value.* That is why we need more of it. The university is an educational institution. Our business is about knowledge. That means that we all have to learn, all the time. Students learn through their lectures, their assignments, their tutorials. Staff learn through their research, through their interaction with the community, and through their teaching. One way or another, we all have to learn, and keep on learning. And we will learn more from those people, those ideas, and those phenomena that we do not know, than from those we know only too well. We need around us people who represent the rich spectrum of South African life, and we need the diversity of ideas that are new to us.

We need to pursue this diversity of people and ideas to increase the quality of our core business – which is to learn. Only in this way, I believe, can we really meet our responsibility to our students. We need, and we wish, to prepare our students to become active and confident participants in a multicultural and globalised society. Whatever the advantages may be of a mono-cultural institution, they do not include the opportunity to meet and engage with many different viewpoints, and to learn about many different environments. One reason why our engagement with diversity of colour is so urgent for us in South Africa is that engagement between black and white people is such a powerful training ground for engagement with different ideas.

*Second: The concept of quality is not one-dimensional.* There are, of course, fields of endeavour in which we measure best on a linear scale. When the 100m sprint takes place at the Olympics, there is only one standard, and that is the time in which the race is run. Whoever runs fastest is regarded as the highest quality athlete. But it is worth keeping in mind that *in order* to run fastest, athletes would

engage in a whole diverse range of activities. It is my contention that in many fields of endeavour, and in higher education in particular, quality is best *not* measured on a linear scale. Quality is after all a *qualitative* concept, not a quantitative one. Take the example of research. There was a time when the disciplinary specialist was king in academia, but nowadays we tend to give at least as much credit, and sometimes more, for cross-disciplinary work. We have come to realise that excellence resides not only in the analytical capacity of taking things apart. It also resides in the synthetic capacity of bringing many and diverse things together. Excellence in research, especially at the collective or institutional level, requires, to my mind, the horizontal dimension of cross-disciplinarity. This is where we deal with the integration of ideas. It is not a matter of accommodating different ideas. It is a matter of deliberately using contrasting, even conflicting ideas, to arrive at a new synthesis.

My *third reason* for saying that quality needs diversity concerns the role of a university in society – and more particularly the role of *this* university, in South African society. I have said that we wish to be a top-class university, and we certainly do. But so do most other universities. We have to be more specific: what does quality mean for us? Certainly it means good research and innovation. Certainly it also means turning out top-quality graduates, well-educated intellectually and well-prepared for the world of work. But I would argue that there is more. For Stellenbosch to be a top-quality university, in the realities of the here and now, must mean also that we are an active participant and role-player in the exciting process of creating a new South African society. Our quality as a university, I would argue, is also judged on the quality of our contribution to society.

And that, in the end, is what it is all about. We wish to be a top-quality university for a reason: to make a contribution to the development of this country, and the development of Africa. We wish to be participants, not spectators, in the new democratic dispensation. We wish to go to work. If this university grew strong during the days of apartheid, let that strength now be put to work for the benefit of all. Let us use this university as a national asset. There is a strong argument that the pursuit of diversity should take place because we owe it to the past. But I believe there is an even stronger argument that the pursuit of diversity is necessary because we owe it to our future.

Your Warden, Mr John Rowett, has referred to the creation of the Mandela Rhodes Foundation as "closing a circle of history". I would like to think that we at Stellenbosch, and by extension the Afrikaans-speakers in this country, all of them, are part of closing the circle of history. Bringing the African National Congress to the DF Malan Hall was, to my mind, in its own way an example of closing the circle of history, and looking towards the future.

# INTRODUCTION TO WHAT IS HAPPENING AT STELLENBOSCH?

July 2003

Like any other university or business Stellenbosch University publishes an official annual report, which appears in the format prescribed by the Department of Education, and contains such official information as the financial statements. In addition I considered it advantageous to deliver an annual public report, in the form of a "State of the University" speech. What follows was the first such speech, in 2003. We later refined this custom by adding to the public speech also a number of small-group meetings with opinion-makers in various centres around the country.

It was in this speech that I mentioned for the first time a phenomenon the extent of which only gradually became clear to me, namely that matters which had been decided and dealt with within the University later crop up as a shock to the consciousness of the traditional Stellenbosch circle. The principles expressed in the Strategic Framework, which was approved by Council in 2000, often suffered this fate at implementation time. It was as though there was an implicit assumption that the fine sentiments expressed by that document would remain nothing but words.

It was also in this speech that I first explicitly addressed one of the myths of Stellenbosch, namely that the University is largely dependent on the financial contributions of its alumni – with the consequential expectation that we should not move too fast with transformation, lest "the cheque books may slam shut". The fact of the matter, however, was that alumni contributions over the preceding few years, much appreciated as they were, had never exceeded more than 8% of total gifts and philanthropic contributions, and that fewer than 5% of alumni on our database had ever made a contribution. Expectations regarding the participation of alumni in decisions regarding the university were clearly out of proportion to their collective financial contribution.

# What is happening at Stellenbosch?

Public Annual Report, 23 July 2003

## 1. Introduction

My title was inspired by events earlier in this year, when we featured on the front pages of the newspapers day after day – not to mention the letter columns. One moment it was about diversity, the next about residences, then about dentistry, and so it continued. During this time, one of the senior members of the convocation came to speak to me. "Professor," he said, "people are talking. They are reading all sorts of things in the newspapers, and now they want to know: what is happening at Stellenbosch?"

"What is happening at Stellenbosch?" That is a reasonable question for anybody who may have heard about so-called vigilante groups in our residences, or may have followed the debates about language, diversity, or institutional culture. I would like to respond to that question tonight. To do so I will paint a picture in broad brush strokes, rather than in minute detail. For those who are interested in facts and figures I can recommend our Annual Report, which appeared in glossy print recently.

## 2. Overview of the past year

"What is happening at Stellenbosch?" I would like to present my answer in three parts.

The first part of my answer is that what is happening at Stellenbosch is the business of scholarship. We remain a university. No matter what changes are being undertaken, our first task is and continues to be to take care of our academic business. And I am happy to be able to report that, in the midst of the many other things happening, our academic business is doing very well.

The excellence of our academic staff can clearly be seen in the frequency with which they receive academic prizes and awards. For example, the top research award in the country is the Harry Oppenheimer award, with a value of up to \$100,000, which was awarded to Prof Jannie Hofmeyr of Biochemistry this year. I could elaborate further on the Gold Medal of the Chemistry Society, the Gold Medal of the Microbiological Society, the Gold Medal of the Zoological Society, the De Beers Medal of the Physics Society, the Akademie's Havenga Prize for Botany, and many more – all prizes and awards that have been won by Stellenbosch academics in the past year. In the broader research field, we have now reached the point where there is no other university in our country with more researchers evaluated by the National Research Foundation. We are currently level with the University of Cape Town, with nearly 200 NRF-evaluated members of staff. Nearly one third of our students are busy with postgraduate degree programmes – the highest percentage in the country.

When it comes to interaction with Business and Industry, we are leading the Higher Education Sector in South Africa. We have a remarkable record regarding THRIP – the Technology and Human Resources in Industry Programme – having gained more funding than any other university for the past five years in a row. In 2002 our THRIP grants totalled almost R25 million, the largest in the country. If you add

the grants and the industry contributions over the past five years the total comes to R245 million. We have done extremely well in the new category of Awards from the National Council for Innovation. In 2002 three of our research groups won awards with a total value of over R30 million: in aquaculture, in satellite technology, and in plant genetics.

When people therefore ask, "What is happening at Stellenbosch?", the first part of the answer is that we are taking care of our academic responsibilities, that we take them seriously, and that we will continue to raise the bar of excellence even higher.

The second part of my answer is to tell you that you that much more is happening than what you have read about in the newspapers. There has been a new Management Team at Stellenbosch since mid-2002, and for the past year we have been busy with planning and renewal on a wide front.

- We have defined a small number of academic focus areas for the university. These are cross-disciplinary domains of enquiry, focusing on societal problems such as health, the knowledge economy, and building a new society in South Africa. Delineating such focus areas was a promise made in our Strategic Planning Framework of 2000, on which we have now delivered.
- We have carried out a comprehensive review of our undergraduate programmes, and a strict process of evaluation. This review, which forms an integral part of the Teaching Management Plan for the University, will leave us in a favourable position with regard to the forthcoming national programme of Quality Audits.
- We are well advanced towards bringing all our community outreach projects under one umbrella, to form the third core function of the University, along research and teaching. We have drafted a Human Resource Management Plan that will be finalised with the input of our newly-appointed Director of Human Resources. We have completed a comprehensive Risk Management Plan, which is already being implemented.
- We created Innovation and Commercialisation as an executive portfolio, and we are well advanced with plans for intellectual property management. Our E-Campus project aims to re-engineer the entire University operation on an electronic platform.
- We have established a set of guiding principles for financial management at the University. This will flow over into our internal funding formula for faculties and administrative departments. In addition, we have undertaken a comprehensive study of the cost-effectiveness of our all our activities, academic and non-academic. It is clear that, increasingly, we will have to integrate our planning process with our budgeting process.

None of these activities are of the headline-grabbing kind, but they are necessary steps towards an efficient and effective organisation.

Having said this, I now reach the third part of my answer to the question, "What is happening at Stellenbosch?", and that is to acknowledge the debate on issues that are related to the *idea* of Stellenbosch - such as language, such as diversity, such as institutional culture. There is not sufficient time in one speech to discuss all three extensively. Tonight I therefore choose to concentrate on the diversity debate - the so-called "white males" debate.



As you will remember, in the first half of this year our Diversity Task Group made an extensive set of suggestions – known as the Draft 2 Diversity Framework – which is available on our website for discussion. One of the objectives of the task group was to encourage discussion, something that they most definitely succeeded in doing. There was a fiery debate, on and off the campus, in the tea-rooms, around the braaivleis fires, and in the press. By far the largest part of this debate centred around the advancement of diversity in the staff corps, and more specifically around proposals that were aimed at addressing the fact that, with only a few exceptions, our senior staff consisted largely of white men.

It is good that there has been a public debate. There is much we can learn from the various contributions we received. But I was struck by the fact that there was so little clarity on issues about which decisions had been taken quite a long time ago. In this regard, I refer specifically to our Strategic Framework. Just to remind you: this guiding document was accepted by the university community in 2000, after a campus-wide participative and transparent process. I believe that it has complete legitimacy in terms of the collective will, and in terms of collective decision-making.

The Strategic Framework makes a number of unequivocal statements on diversity which are worth recalling. As its point of departure, the Strategic Framework puts it directly that: "

The University acknowledges its contribution to the injustices of the past, and therefore commits itself to appropriate redress and development initiatives"

With these words, three years ago, the University committed itself to affirmative action. The somewhat indignant questions by some letter writers about whether the University is also planning to embark on affirmative action are therefore anachronistic. We are not going to *start* with corrective action – we have doing with it since 2000. Furthermore, the Strategic Framework also clearly states the priority that has to be given to this action:

..."bringing about a corps of excellent students and academic and administrative staff members that is demographically more representative of South African society must be fundamental to all our actions".

This is completely unambiguous: the university community made a promise that the advancement of diversity will form the foundation of everything we do. Whether we are appointing staff, or recruiting students; whether we are concerned with the promotion of research or the advancement of teaching: we made the promise that we will try to reconcile excellence and diversity.

Fulfilling this promise is obviously not easy. But the work has already begun. The Strategic Framework was followed by a number of policy documents and specific plans that provide greater clarity on the implementation. I would like to mention a few examples.

**Example 1:** We accepted an Employment Equity Plan for members of staff that is based on the idea of utilising diversity as an asset. One of the practical consequences of this is our Staff Diversification Policy, according to which more than 100 appointments of women, brown and black people were made in the recent past, over and above the normal staff complement.

**Example 2:** We have a Code for Management Practices, which was compiled by our legal consultants, to handle issues such as advertising and recruitment in practice. Those of you who have followed the diversity debate will remember that this, in particular, was one of the fields about which indignant-questions were asked, such as "Doesn't the University have an obligation to advertise?", "May you recruit before you advertise?", etc. The answers to all these questions are readily available and had already been sorted out before the recent debate.

**Example 3:** One specific plan, which we launched last year and is known as the Interim Diversity Campaign, was to bring about a drastic increase in the number of new Coloured and black students in 2003. The question that was posed to our Corporate Affairs Division was quite simple: if you retain the admission requirements, but make more financial aid available, how many more Coloured and black first year students would we be able to register in 2003? And I can now report the answer to this question: Just by making more financial aid available, we have this year registered 44% more new Coloured and black first year students than last year.

Something else that became clear from the debate is that grater of diversity can all too easily be seen as a threat. For this reason, Management decided to undertake a consultation tour on the campus to listen to the views of the staff and students in this regard. All the faculties and divisions at Stellenbosch and Tygerberg were involved in the process. A total of 16 consultations of 90 minutes each were held. On each occasion, the dean or divisional head acted as host and I personally acted as a partner in the discussion on all 16 of these occasions.

I can tell you that this consultation tour was a very valuable opportunity for communication, that open and honest discussions were held, that we learned a lot from them, and that we could allay most of the fears. For example, we were asked whether the University of Stellenbosch is actively discriminating against white males. And the answer was that our Employment Equity Plan explicitly states that we are striving for a work environment in which there will be no unfair discrimination. We were asked if there still is a future for young white men at Stellenbosch University. And the answer is that no word is mentioned in any plan against the concept of promotion on merit. We were asked whether excellence will suffer at the hands of affirmative action. And the answer is that "the University, in its endeavour to achieve employment equity, will not neglect its mission of promoting excellence in the pursuit of scientific knowledge".

It is important for us to realise that the subject of diversity is linked to the subject of language. You will remember that we went through a major language debate last year, and that this lead to a renewed commitment by Stellenbosch to Afrikaans as medium of instruction. You know that this was settled in a language policy and language plan for the University. The point that I am making is that the advancement of Afrikaans as language of teaching here at Stellenbosch is very closely related to the advancement of diversity. We have said that we want to use Afrikaans as an instrument for the empowerment of people from previously disadvantaged environments: now we have to put this into practice. We have said that there are many brown and black people who can and would prefer to study in Afrikaans: we now have to prove this statement. We have said that the use of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch is not a pretext for keeping Stellenbosch white - now we will be tested on whether this is true.

I believe that, in the long term, the continued existence of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University will depend on whether we can prove that we serve all Afrikaans-speaking people, of *all* equally colours and whether they are all made to feel equally at home. It follows that the best contribution all of us can make in maintaining the use of Afrikaans as our medium of instruction is to join forces to attract more brown and black students, and staff who have a command of Afrikaans to our campus. In short: to extend Afrikaans, we urgently and in a purposeful manner, need to extend the diversity of colour within Afrikaans.

The final comment that I want to make about language and diversity is related to the hard financial realities. By the time the Language Task Team had done its work, we had learnt something simple but profound: Language costs money. Whether it is to bring more brown and black Afrikaans speakers to the University, or to launch empowerment programmes in Afrikaans, or whether it is language services, or 'Woordfeeste': all these things cost money. For example, the salaries and operating costs for our recently established Language Centre, in which we address these issues, amount to nearly R3,5 million per year. I therefore would like to say to all our alumni and supporters: the extension of the Afrikaans language at Stellenbosch is not a free exercise. It will require strategy and tactics, it will require work, and it is going to cost money. For this we would like to ask for help from our alumni and supporters.

I know that the topic of alumni contributions to university funds was often raised in the recent debates – sometimes with concern that the cheque books might be slammed shut if too many changes took place. Some clarity on this issue might be helpful. Donations from alumni are very important to us – but they are not yet as important as we would like them to be. For example, during the past five years we have never received donations from more than 5% of our alumni. Also, during the past five years the donations from alumni in any given year never amounted to more than 8% of the total donations – in a typical year this figure is under 6%. Last year, for example, donations from alumni amounted to R4,2 million of the total amount of donations of R62,2 million (that is 6,75%). Obviously we are very grateful to those who do support us in this manner. In relation to this I need to thank two very important benefactors: Dr Christo Wiese and Mr Gys Steyn, who both recently made contributions amounting to at least R1 million.

I would be very happy to see that the interest shown by the majority of alumni in University affairs, is equalled by the level of their financial support for those matters that they regard as important. I believe that the way in which alumni can obtain co-ownership of the changes at Stellenbosch is to drive the changes by means of donations, and by stipulating the issues for which the donations should be applied. For example: it appears unlikely that we will receive considerable funds from foreign donors for the extension of Afrikaans. However, this is a matter of considerable importance to our alumni, and one which we would like to provide you with the opportunity to support.

### **3. Vision statement**

I now would like to move on to a vision statement for the University, but first let me make a few remarks. When I look back over the past year, and ask what lessons we have learnt, a few items stand out very clearly. Perhaps the most valuable lesson we have learnt is the enormous symbolic value in South Africa of what is happening at Stellenbosch. When the ANC held their 51st Conference here it

was world news – not just because it was the ANC, but because it was Stellenbosch. The symbolism of a black president opening the ANC Conference in the DF Malan Hall at Stellenbosch was a clear signal of how South Africa is reinventing itself. And as with good news, so with bad. When young Afrikaner males rough up other young Afrikaner males in one of our residences, why does this make the front page of a national newspaper? Because what happens here is taken as a symbol of what is happening in the Afrikaner psyche.

The second lesson we have learnt is that we, as a University, will have to turn the interest in what is happening at Stellenbosch to our advantage. Quite rightly, a number of editorials in recent months have pointed out that our communication has been reactive rather than proactive. I believe that there is essentially a good-news message for the country coming from the changes at Stellenbosch, but that it is up to us to shake off the image of a conservative and authoritarian institution. We should take steps to improve our strategic communication, and we intend to do so.

The third lesson we have learnt is that slick communication alone will not suffice. There should also be a clear message as to where we are heading. What is needed is a vision statement which is crisp and clear, and which will become part of the mindset of every Matie.

I therefore would now like to share with you the vision statement of the Management and the Council of the University of Stellenbosch. This is something which flows from our Strategic Framework, as well as from the many discussions that we have had during the past year. Think of the vision statement, as the outcome of a thought experiment, and ask the following question. Imagine that it is now the year 2012, and that we are looking back at the 10 years since 2002: what is it that we would like to be able to say about the Stellenbosch University?

- **Excellence.** The first and most important thing that we would like to be able to say in ten years' time is that Stellenbosch is a top university. This is stated in our current vision statement, and remains foremost in our thoughts. Whatever changes take place in the Higher Education Sector, and whatever parameters universities are measured against: in 2012 we will want to enjoy both national and international acknowledgement as a university of excellence.
- **Participation.** Within the context of change in South Africa and in Africa, we find ourselves facing a fundamental question: are we going to be spectators, or participants? The vision of the Management and the Council is that this university will be an active role player in the development of a new society in South Africa. We believe that part of the excellence of a university is situated in the extent to which you participate in and guide civil society, in the way in which social problems are tackled, and in the creation of wealth.
- **Scholarship.** We are and remain academics. The way in which we can best carry out our participation is by making use of that which lies at the foundation of academic output, namely scholarship. Here I mean an approach, not a specific discipline. We have a certain way of thinking, of reasoning, and of addressing problems; it is this that we want to use to put into practice our motto of "your knowledge partner". We would also like to build a bridge between scholarship and technology, with specific reference to the extension of the knowledge economy.

- **Diversity.** When we get to 2012 and look back at the preceding 10 years, we would like to be able to say that we delivered on the promises that we made in our Strategic Framework with reference to diversity. We would then like to be able to say that Stellenbosch looks much more like the rest of the country than was the case in 2002. And even more: in 2012 we would like to be able to say that people are comfortable with each other on a campus of diversity. We would like to be able to say that diversity is no longer an issue.
- **Afrikaans.** In 2012, we would like to be able to say that we have done our part, and more, to extend Afrikaans as an academic language. We would like to be able to say that we have retained our commitment to Afrikaans, and that Afrikaans is still accepted as a language of teaching and science that provides students with access to the practice of science of international standard. We would like to be able to say that we have achieved this without arrogance and without subjection, simply as something that flows naturally from the diverse multi-lingualism of this country.

These five points contain our vision for the University: excellence, participation, scholarship, diversity and Afrikaans. You can count them on the fingers of one hand; you do not need long words to say them, and you can easily convey them to the proverbial man in the street. And this is the answer that I would like to offer to the question, "where is Stellenbosch University heading?"

#### 4. The road ahead

Our Vision Statement answers the question about where we want to go. In the immediate future, we need to pay attention to the question of how we are going to get there. What is it that we are going to do, in the shorter term, and more specifically in the coming year? During the past year, all the management projects were directed very strongly towards planning. In the coming year, this focus will shift to implementation. There are a number of items, currently on our list.

Regarding diversity: the consultation tour made a big contribution to shaping our thoughts. So much so that the Management could develop a document in which the road ahead is spelled out. This document, titled "Conceptualisation of a Diversity Plan for the University of Stellenbosch", is now available on our website, at <http://www.sun.ac.za/diversity>. In this document we set out the nature and methodology of the process needed to extend diversity. We formulate a number of clear principles, and we spell out who must do what in the coming years. We plan to follow a rolling plan approach, in which each faculty and division of the University will update a three-year rolling plan on an annual basis, within the context of their normal annual planning cycle. Similarly, we are planning to give specific attention to diversity every year as an integrated part of the budget of each faculty and division, within the normal annual budget process. And each year we will combine all of these in an update of the Institutional Plan of the University.

I am happy to be able to report that this document enjoys the support of the Council. We can therefore now enter into the formal consultation process, which we interrupted three months ago when we decided to first undertake the informal consultation tour. The formal process entails that the

document is submitted to the Senate and to the Institutional Forum, and that it is then, together with the comments of these two bodies, submitted to the Council for formal decision-making.

Meanwhile, the funding of our diversity initiative has received significant support from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation in New York. We have been successful with an application for increasing our black staff through a "grow your own timber" initiative. I am pleased to announce that the Mellon Foundation has made \$1 million available for this purpose. We will use the funds to create 40 scholarships for black students at MSc, PhD and post-doctorate level, with a view to appointing these students as staff members in due course. On behalf of the University I would like to thank the Mellon Foundation for this vote of confidence in our change management.

I can also announce that, from other donor sources, we have created a special fund to support students who have succeeded in overcoming disadvantage. Certainly we wish to reward excellence. But it is only fair to see the attainment of excellence as being relative to context. We have students who do not enjoy many of the advantages that are sometimes taken for granted, such as a stable home and study environment, solid schools, a reasonable standard of living, being able-bodied, and so on. Many of these students attain a remarkable level of success, when seen against the background of what they were up against. For these students we are starting the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds. The main criteria for eligibility will be the demonstrated ability to overcome difficult circumstances, and success relative to circumstances. We will make available up to three awards per year, each being worth up to R50,000 per year, and each tenable for up to three years.

And now, some comments regarding language. I mentioned earlier that, during the past year, we developed 10 focus areas for the University. I can now announce that the concept of *language and multilingualism* is at the top of this list, as the first focus area of the University of Stellenbosch. By so doing, we create a link between Afrikaans as a strategic priority and language as an academic focus. For the immediate future, our priority is to put the new language policy and language plan into practical operation. We will ensure that a short and comprehensible version of the language policy is compiled, that a code of conduct is compiled for language use in the classrooms, and that our provision of language services is extended energetically. I once again want to appeal to our alumni to support us in this regard.

There is one more focus area to which I would like to draw attention. Besides being problem-solvers, we would also like to be standard bearers for the fundamental sciences, and that is why this is now one of our focus areas. We would like to be a university where mathematics, physics, chemistry and other fundamental sciences are strong. As an example of this, I can announce that, in partnership with the two other universities in the Western Cape, we have established the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences. This institute aims to draw up to 50 young mathematicians from Africa every year and to award them a Cambridge-accredited postgraduate qualification.

In the area of participation there are many other examples that I could mention, but I believe one is sufficient, namely Sport. The question is sometimes posed whether the University does enough for sport. However, we have now come to the realisation that there is a better question to ask. Not "are we doing enough for sport?", but "are we doing enough *with* sport?" And the answer is No, we can do considerably more with sport. We have therefore decided to promote the use of sport as a strategic

asset. For example, I can now announce that the Executive Committee of the Council has already approved, in principle, the improved commercial use of the Coetzenburg sport facilities.

The last example of a specific project for the coming year that I want to mention is the development of an overarching business plan. We believe that we can and must manage the University on the basis of sound business principles. We have already compiled a number of Principles of Financial Management, which were accepted by the Council after wide-ranging consultations. The Business Plan will be the financial mirror image of our annual Institutional Plan, and both will be included in a cyclic manner in our annual management and control processes.

## **5. Conclusion**

I have been speaking for some time now, and it is time to conclude. I must tell you that I believe that South Africa is currently the most interesting country in the world in which to live and to work. Anybody with a sense of history can see that we in South Africa are in the middle of a laboratory in which the experiments for the new world order are being conducted. I believe that this new order will not work if Africa does not come into its own, and Africa cannot come into its own if we cannot get South Africa to work. I believe that, for South Africa to work, it is essential that there must be examples of how we rise above our divided past and move to a shared sense of South African citizenship. I believe that we can differ from one another without isolating ourselves from one another. I believe that the country yearns for success stories. And I believe that Stellenbosch is a success story in the making.

Let us be honest: what we are trying to do here is something that few universities have attempted, and in which even fewer have succeeded. We want to rise above a small-town base, a minority language, and an unhappy political history, to international standing. This is a challenge – but it is precisely the sort of challenge that inspires people. I believe that Stellenbosch is worthy of such a challenge. And I appeal to all of you to join us in this challenge.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE BUSINESS OF THE UNIVERSITY

June 2004

Universities everywhere are changing, and much of that change has to do with the fact that, in this millennium, knowledge is not just a form of power, but a form of money. Independent of any cultural debates regarding Stellenbosch we therefore also had to consider the universal issue of the manner and extent to which a university should consider itself as a business. My view on this question is straightforward: a university is not a business, but it should be managed on sound business principles in order to serve scholarship. The speech that follows elaborated on this idea. It was also in this speech that I first mentioned the yearning for guarantees as a cultural phenomenon.



# The Business of the University

## Address to the "Kaaipstadse Sakekamer" (Cape Chamber of Commerce)

23 June 2004

In the academic field we have a saying that if you have written three articles on the same topic, you should start thinking about writing a book. Today is the third time that I address one of the Western Cape "Sakekamers", so perhaps I should start thinking along the lines of a series.

During 2002, I addressed the Bellville Sakekamer on the vision and mission of the University. A few months later, I spoke at the Stellenbosch Sakekamer on the issue of whether the University was a business. (By the way, the short answer was No. But the long answer was Yes.) I would like to view today's gathering as a continuation of those discussions. My topic is "The business of the University". And I will talk for a short while on the current state of our business. However, I want to dedicate the greater part of my talk not to what our business is (because this is probably not unknown), but to how we operate our business. And from that, I hope, we will discover that there is a considerable overlap between our fields of work.

The business of the University, in brief, is the academic business. To be even more brief: it's about knowledge. Our business is the creation of knowledge, the dissemination of knowledge, the application of knowledge, and the integration of knowledge. The first of these is our research function, the second is our teaching function, the third is part of our community interaction, and the fourth is part of our intellectual function.

So far, so good. But this brief picture of the academic business ignores one very important fact, namely that, locally and globally, all universities are undergoing a process of transformation. (I am aware that "transformation" is one of those words that easily raise the blood pressure of South Africans, and I therefore hasten to repeat that the process of transformation in Higher Education is a global one.) We are in an era during which the role of the University in society, as well as how Universities should change to fulfil such a role or roles, is being debated everywhere.

This gives rise to the question: why now? Universities have been operating for hundreds of years, and one would think that, by now, the reason for their existence and their role should be entirely clear. Why is this process of self-examination underway now? I think there are two reasons, and that they are connected. I will talk about the first of these two reasons briefly, and about the second in more detail.

The first reason is the new role of knowledge as a driver of the economy. In the so-called knowledge economy, the welfare of countries does not depend on what you dig out of the ground, or what you cultivate in your fields, or what you manufacture in your factories, or what you trade across your borders – it depends on the knowledge that is in people's heads, and putting that knowledge to work. As early as 1620, Francis Bacon said that "knowledge is power"; what we have begun to realise more

recently is that, in addition, "knowledge is money". Now, knowledge has always been the domain of the universities, and money has always been the domain of business. But suddenly we are discovering that these two fields, which have historically been separate from one another, are starting to overlap and interact. It is therefore no wonder that universities are displaying symptoms of existential angst.

The second reason why the business of universities is being reconsidered has to do with a fundamental change in the nature of the society within which the university operates. It is about this that I want to talk at somewhat greater length

One of the international organisations to which we belong as a University is the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) – a loose network of nearly 500 universities in Commonwealth countries. This organisation is a useful way of staying up to date with trends in the university environment. Ten years ago, in 1994, the then Secretary General of the ACU, Michael Gibbons, together with a number of other authors, published an influential book, *The New Production of Knowledge*<sup>1</sup>. The idea set out in this book is essentially that the end of the Cold War is not just about a transition to a world with only one superpower. It coincided with what Gibbons et al call a transition from a "Mode 1 Society" to what they call a "Mode 2 Society". Unimaginative as this terminology may sound, the associated concepts caught the imagination and gained broad acceptance in Higher Education – including in South Africa, and especially with our planners of education.

In order to convey the essence of the matter, I would like to quote from a more recent article by Gibbons in which he explains the issue..

During the twilight of the Cold War, if not before, the relative institutional separation between society's major institutions had begun to break down ... The once clear lines of demarcation between government, industry and the universities, between science of the universities and the technology of the industry, between basic research, applied research and product development, between careers in academe and those in industry seem no longer to apply. Instead, there is movement across established categories, greater permeability of institutional boundaries, greater blurring of professional identities, greater diversity of career patterns. In sum, the major institutions of society have been transgressed as institutions have crossed onto one another's terrain.

Furthermore:

Contemporary society, too, is characterised by a pervasive uncertainty, generated by the same process of transgression that science is experiencing. Here, too, the formerly clear boundaries between the State, the market and culture have become more permeable. Here, too, uncertainty, in its turn, is generating greater willingness to explore alternatives, whether in organisational forms, or inter-institutional cooperation, which in turn affects the jobs people do and those with whom they are prepared to work. The upshot is that societies now comprise more open, experimentally-oriented systems. In society and science, this openness and experimental orientation is both a cause of, and a response to, growing complexity and uncertainty of the problems and issues that need to be addressed.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of complexity is of key importance here. It does not only mean that things are more complicated. It also has the technical meaning of complex dynamic systems that influence each other in such a way that there is an inherent unpredictability in the entire system. The interactions are of a so-called *non-linear* nature, which means that you cannot predict the outcomes by simply extrapolating from the inputs and the functioning of the respective systems themselves.

For those of you who are interested in such things, I would like to recommend the inaugural lecture of one of our Professors in Philosophy, Prof. Paul Cilliers.<sup>1</sup> An interesting discussion with Paul on this issue was also published in *Die Burger* on 3 June this year.

Now, to add my own pennyworth, I would like to make a distinction I have found useful in thinking about the complex and dynamic process that is the business of the University. This is that we are experiencing a transition from a world of **"or"** to a world of **"and"**.

The roots of many of us lie in the time and the world of **"or"**. In this world we readily and conveniently characterised people, ideas and actions, or even stereotyped them, as one thing or another. In a manner of speaking, everything was either black or white. You were Afrikaans or English, a Matie or a Tukkies, from campus or from town. Things were right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, first or last, win or lose, friend or foe, all or nothing. You were either for or against any issue; in any environment you were either one of us or one of them. There was an answer to every question and, in principle at least, if not in practice, the future was a predictable outcome of the past.

The new reality, in the world of **"and"**, is one that acknowledges the simultaneity of different realities – even if those realities appear to be contradictory. Many of us speak Afrikaans and English, study at Maties and Tukkies, are equally comfortable in South Africa and overseas, work as academics and businesspeople, have no problem to see both beautiful and ugly or right and wrong at the same time. We are increasingly coming to realise that different points of view can be valid at the same time, that networks are more important than bastions, that you can approach a problem from different angles, and that decision-making is concerned more with the development of a process than with the substantiation of some or other predetermined truth. Increasingly, we need an experimental and pragmatic approach, rather than a dogmatic and ideological one, to the business of life.

This is the Mode 2 Society of which Michael Gibbons speaks. It contrasts with the Mode 1 Society, which is briefly and strikingly characterised as follows in *The New Production of Knowledge*:

The term Mode 1 refers to a form of knowledge production ... that has grown up to control the diffusion of the Newtonian model to more and more fields of enquiry and ensure its compliance with what is considered sound scientific practice.

You may ask what all of this has to do with business, and with the Kaapstadse Sakekamer. One of the key concepts of the Mode 2 Society is that the domains of institutions that were previously viewed as separate are increasingly overlapping. As broad examples, Gibbons mentions the state, the business and industry sector, and community organisations. The point he is making is obviously also applicable to more specific cases, such as the increasing overlap between the business of the university and the business of Business.

Let me make this point in another way as well. At one of my previous Sakekame discussions, the question was: "Is the University like a business?" I think we are now beginning to see a complementary question on the other side of the coin: "Are businesses perhaps becoming more like universities?"

Consider the fundamental tasks of the university: research, teaching and community interaction. Business is increasingly also doing research – or if it does not do so itself, it can always purchase it. Businesses increasingly have some or other form of internal training function – and the business of some businesses is training. And, increasingly, businesses have a community interaction function, usually under the banner of "corporate social responsibility". In addition to these internal properties, there is also the common environment we share. Just think of the following:

- Increased government control, and regulatory frameworks.
- The requirement of good corporate management. The King II report, and compliance with it.
- The "triple bottom line", and "sustainability reporting"
- Corporate requirements of quality assurance, risk management, and cost effectiveness.

I am not trying to say that the key business of the University and of Business is the same. Not at all. What I am saying, however, is that the way in which we conduct our business is increasingly converging, and that this convergence is driven by the characteristics of a Mode 2 Society.

I now want to say something briefly about the business of the university, and I then want to conclude by talking about how we conduct our business.

The years 2002 and 2003 were predominantly planning years at Stellenbosch. We are now at the point where we have outlined a very clear five-point vision for ourselves, and where we have formulated the plans and policy documents that are necessary to realise this vision. The five-point vision statement is as follows:

The University of Stellenbosch:

- Is an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner
- Contributes towards building the scientific, technological and intellectual capacity of Africa
- Is an active role player in the development of the South African society
- Has a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas
- Promotes Afrikaans as language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.

To realise this vision, we have the following in place:

- Learning and Teaching management plan
- Research management plan (including Focus Areas)
- Community interaction plan
- Language plan
- Diversity plan
- Commercialisation plan
- Institutional Business Plan

I would like to focus your attention on the last item: like any good business, we have a business plan. If I had really wanted to talk about the business of the university today, I would have elaborated on the nature and content of that business plan.

However, I would like to conclude by talking about how we conduct our business, namely that we strive to work within the context of a Mode 2 Society in the execution of our business plan. We are still on a learning curve in this regard, but I would like to share with you a few of the lessons that we have learnt at the university in the operation of our business. And, by the way, I notice that this learning process is part of what people sometimes refer to as "transformation".

- We must learn to work with uncertainty. For many people, it is still a culture shock to hear that the future is not necessarily a continuation of the past. Whether you are talking about a language policy, or about academic programmes, or about next year's state subsidy, I still encounter those who hesitate to move before they know the outcome of that movement. My view is that there are no longer any guarantees, that if you wait for certainty before you move you will not move, and that, if you do not move, you will be left behind.
- We need to learn to work with apparent contradictions. I believe in the creative energy that is released when you allow apparent contradictions to rub up against each other. Let me mention two examples. In the company in which I find myself today, I often hear that two of the items of our five-point vision statement are contradictory, namely the pursuit of excellence and the promotion of diversity. In this regard, various statistics regarding matriculation results etc. are often quoted. Coincidentally, tomorrow I will be in a different environment when I present a talk similar to this one to the Black Management Forum. And in that environment, I often hear the argument that two other items of our vision statement are contradictory, namely the promotion of diversity and the promotion of Afrikaans. What is interesting is that those who point out the first so-called contradiction seldom agree with the second, and vice versa.

My view, however, is the same for both these apparent contradictions: we are undertaking a process during which, in time, each of the items of our vision statement must come into its own. It is exactly the juxtaposition of excellence, Afrikaans and diversity that unleashes forces through which we can move forward. It is not a blueprint that you implement or a problem that you solve once and for all – it is a situation that needs to be managed continuously.

- We must learn to work with differences – and even with controversies. By this I do not mean that we must align ourselves in different camps – quite the contrary. I mean that we must learn to work with those from whom we differ. Moreover, we must learn to cooperate while we differ, and also that we can differ while we cooperate. The metaphor of different camps of friends and enemies is a metaphor of the previous, Mode 1 Society. What we need are the networks within which all are both collaborators and competitors. We must learn to be able to cooperate with those with whom we compete, and to compete with our collaborators. There is even a new word for this: "Coopetition".

Speaking of metaphors: we need to change the terms of our discourse, and to learn how to talk to each other across the traditional boundaries – about change, about insecurity, and about differ-

ences. Personally, I find that a great deal of rhetoric is still caught up in the metaphors of power and conflict that characterised the Mode 1 Society. Too often I still hear about us and them, about drawing a line in the sand, about digging trenches and about asserting your rights. I believe that we have not yet developed a proper method of discourse in the Mode 2 Society.

Let me conclude on a positive note. I believe that this country is now undeniably a better place than it was ten years ago. I believe that this improvement has a lot to do with the way in which the country's business is now run – and that this way is one of the global examples of the development of a Mode 2 Society. I believe that the business of the university and the business of Business are starting to converge – and that each of us has a great deal to learn from the other. I believe that the ordinary, old-fashioned business of the university suits the essence of a Mode 2 Society very well. Our vision is that we will conduct the business of the university in such a way that we will add value to the future of the kind of society in which we now find ourselves.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> M Gibbons, C Limoges, H Nowotny, S Schwartzman, P Scott & M Trow: *The New Production of Knowledge*, SAGE Publications, London 1994.
- <sup>2</sup> Both quotations are from Michael Gibbons, "Engagement as a core value in a Mode 2 Society", in S Bjarnason & P Coldstream: *THE IDEA OF ENGAGEMENT – UNIVERSITIES IN SOCIETY*, Association of Commonwealth Universities 2003, pp 48-70.
- <sup>3</sup> Available at the Stellenbosch University Division of Marketing and Communication.

# INTRODUCTION TO VISION 2012: HOW ARE WE DOING?

July 2004

By 2004 most of our policy and planning decisions were in place, and we could begin to measure our progress in terms of Vision 2012. I did so for the first time in my annual public report of July 2004, and this way of defining our key performance indicators and measuring our progress became standard practice afterwards.

It was also in this speech that I first explicitly formulated the definition of transformation as the attainment of Vision 2012, and made the point that transformation is not a numbers game but a mind game.

# Vision 2012: How are we doing?

## Public Annual Report

29 July 2004

### Introduction

The years 2002 and 2003 were primarily planning years at Stellenbosch. We have now outlined a clear 5-point vision for 2012, and formulated the plans and policies required to realise this vision. The 5-point vision statement (accepted by Council in September 2003) is as follows:

With this vision statement, Stellenbosch University commits itself to an outward-oriented role within South Africa, in Africa, and globally

Stellenbosch University:

- Is an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner
- Contributes towards building the scientific, technological, and intellectual capacity of Africa
- Is an active role-player in the development of the South African society
- Has a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas
- Promotes Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.

I would like to report today on our progress towards achieving this vision statement. And I am going to do so in two parts. The first part will entail reporting on Stellenbosch University on a small scale – by that I mean progress on our campus in terms of the achievements of our staff and students. In the second and more general part, I will report on Stellenbosch on a larger scale. This means, in addition to staff and students, changes in the community that we try to serve – former and future students, knowledge partners, and Matie supporters in general.

Regarding Part 1, I will report in terms of each of the five points of our vision.

## Part 1: Progress with Vision 2012 on the campus

### 1. Excellence

I am pleased to report that Stellenbosch's reputation as an excellent academic institution continues to improve. I would like to begin with the most recent achievement: two new national Centres of Excellence are currently being established at Stellenbosch. The idea for such Centres of Excellence in which national priorities can be addressed is an initiative of the Department of Science and Technology, implemented by the National Research Foundation (NRF), and forms part of the national Research and Development Strategy. One of the most important positive points of the Centres of Excellence is that they ensure stability and growth by means of good funding over a 10-year period. A rigorous competitive process of application and evaluation was followed, and it was finally decided that, from the more than 70 initial applicants, only six such national centres would be established in the first phase. Two of these six have been allocated to Stellenbosch. They are:



- The Centre for Invasion Biology, under the leadership of Prof. Steven Chown. (Incidentally, Prof. Chown recently received the prestigious A rating from the NRF.)
- The Centre for Biomedical TB Research, under the leadership of Prof. Paul van Helden (in cooperation with Prof. Valerie Mizrahi and Wits University).

The University can truly be proud of staff who function at this level of excellence.

Under "excellence" we should also make mention of the outstanding performance of our Business School. Not only have they received two sought-after international accreditations (EQUIS and AMBA), but they have also lifted their profile in the national league tables. They were listed by *Professional Management Review* as the top Business School in the country, and moved up to third place nationally in the rankings of the *Financial Mail*. It is no surprise, then, that in the recent shake-out of Business Schools by the national Department of Education, our Business School received full accreditation – one of only six country-wide. Moreover, just to put the cherry on top, it was recently announced that our Business School is one of only 10 Schools internationally to be selected for participation in a program on "Business and Society" mounted by the prestigious Aspen Institute in Washington DC. With that, the Stellenbosch Business School finds itself in the company of peers such as the London School of Economics, INSEAD in Paris, and various American Ivy League universities.

In addition, I take pride in reporting that our students are also truly performing at the top level of achievement. Earlier this year, I visited our most important partner universities in Europe, with whom we have exchange agreements, and I was continuously reassured that the Matie students who turn up there are among the best students they get. The list of achievements is too long to do justice to in this talk. However, by way of example I would like to make special mention of the achievements of Ms Christine Steinmann, a PhD student in Physics, who was awarded a national "Women Scientist Fellowship" to the value of R100,000 and who has been invited to spend six months doing research with the Nobel Prize winner, Prof. Carl Weimann, in Colorado. Other students in the Department of Physics are already following in her footsteps, as is evident from the fact that, at the recent annual conference of the South African Institute for Physics, Stellenbosch students won nearly all the prizes allocated to students.

I would also like to give credit to our staff. In the midst of many changes on our campus, our staff still succeed in raising our academic profile. That would not be possible without a great deal of hard work and dedication! On behalf of the University, our sincere thanks.

## **2. Scientific, Intellectual and Technological Capacity-building in Africa**

One important part of our vision revolves around the fact that we are Africans. Our work, our aspirations and our contributions must always be seen in that light. There is no conflict between international competitiveness and being rooted in the African soil. Accordingly, it is important for us to have active programs and collaborations in an African context. I am proud to mention a few of them here.

- Our *African Centre for HIV/AIDS Management* is a remarkable story. It is a collaborative program with Medunsa, started in 2001 with a 3-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation in New York, to empower Business and Industry, NGOs and Government, to deal with the ever-increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the workplace. In 2001 there were 63 students. Then in 2002 there were 184 students,

and in 2003 the Centre catered for 370 students. These students came from 24 different countries, mainly African. 80% of the students are African blacks, and 80% are women. It is clear that this gives an entirely different complexion to the notion of being a Matie student. And there is a significant follow-on effect. For example, of the 63 original students in 2001, 27 of their children were studying at Stellenbosch in 2003.

Time and space permit only brief mention of similar African initiatives:

- The *African Institute for Mathematical Sciences* (AIMS) is a collaborative venture of the three Universities in the Western Cape, together with Cambridge, Oxford and Paris-Sud. We offer a postgraduate diploma to students from African countries, and delivered our first cohort of diplomands in June this year. AIMS is housed in a fully-quipped seven-storey building in Muizenberg, and has substantial international donor support.
- NetACT is the *Network of African Congregational Theology* of our Faculty of Theology, a network of theological institutions in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa. NetACT aims to develop leadership from the church to empower suffering people in Africa to take responsibility for their future.
- From the Business School we have the *Africa Centre for Investment Analysis*, which was set up to help address the training and research needs of Africa in advanced and development finance. Over the past five years, the Centre has established a unique brand of education and training models to suit the needs of Africa, including a master's degree, short courses, international conferences, and publishing of the *African Finance Journal* and the *African Markets Overview*.
- From the Faculty of Agriculture we have ASNAPP – that is, *Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural African Plant Products*. This project, co-funded by USAID and with collaboration from a number of American universities, was initiated in 1999 to help develop the natural products sector in Africa by promoting income-generating activities for rural entrepreneurs in such a way that improves the livelihoods of rural communities. ASNAPP currently works in South Africa, Zambia, Madagascar, Guinea and Ghana.

### 3. Stellenbosch as Role-player

Part of our vision entails being an active participant in building a just and prosperous South Africa. We believe that the best way in which to carry out this part of our vision is through the availability of our people and our knowledge base. We are proud, for example, that our Vice-Rector (Teaching), Prof. Russel Botman, was recently re-elected as President of the South African Council of Churches, that Prof. Doug Rawlings was elected as President of the Royal Society of South Africa, and that Dr Christa van Louw is the Chairperson of the *Nasionale Taaliggaam vir Afrikaans* (National Language Body for Afrikaans).

One of the best measures of role playing on the basis of our research expertise is the NRF's THRIP programme, which provides funds from the state coffers in proportion to the research support that we ourselves obtain from the Business and Industry sector. This is a true measure of service provision on the basis of our research expertise. I am happy to report that, as in the past six years, we once again earned by far the largest amount in THRIP funding of all the universities in the country, and therefore are the leading university for role playing in the Business and Industry sector.

A measure of our participation in nation-building is the extent to which our expertise is sought after by organs of state. Here I would like to mention two examples. CREST, our Centre for Research on Science and Technology, is the foremost centre of expertise on the methodology and sociology of science in South Africa, and is regularly consulted by the Department of Science and Technology in relation to policy development. Another prime example is our Bureau of Economic Research (BER). The Bureau focuses primarily on the South African macro-economy and selected economic sectors. For over 55 years, it has been monitoring economic trends and identifying and analyzing the forces, both local and international, that affect South African business. With this track record, the BER is highly sought after to assist both private and public sector clients to make difficult decisions on economic issues.

#### 4. Diversity

With regard to diversity, I can report that we are making satisfactory progress in terms of the colour profile of our students, slow progress with regard to the colour profile of our staff, good progress with regard to the promotion of women, and mixed progress in terms of the broader sphere of institutional culture.

Here are the student statistics for the past three years:

ENROLMENTS OF COLOURED, AFRICAN AND INDIAN CONTACT STUDENTS OF STELLENBOSCH  
AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL ENROLMENTS FOR 2002 TO 2004

Faculty/Race	Colored, African & Indian students					
	Undergraduate			All students		
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
Arts	15.8	18.7	20.9	24.9	25.9	25.9
Science	13.3	15.3	19.0	17.3	19.4	23.2
Education	0.8	1.8	3.3	28.3	29.4	33.2
Agriculture & Forestry	10.5	10.7	11.1	16.9	16.7	15.6
Law	23.9	24.3	24.7	21.8	23.7	23.3
Theology	33.8	34.0	37.4	44.5	52.6	49.7
Economic & Business Sciences	10.6	13.1	14.2	17.3	20.7	23.3
Engineering	7.0	8.6	9.9	11.6	11.8	12.5
Health Sciences	23.9	27.8	32.6	29.0	31.8	36.9
Military Sciences	58.3	64.7	70.5	49.4	59.4	67.1
<b>Total enrolments</b>	<b>12461</b>	<b>13113</b>	<b>13446</b>	<b>19337</b>	<b>20303</b>	<b>21000</b>
White	85.3	82.9	81.1	78.3	76.0	73.9
Coloured	11.3	12.7	14.0	11.5	12.4	13.4
African	2.3	3.0	3.6	8.1	9.3	10.7
Indian	1.1	1.4	1.3	2.1	2.3	2.0
<b>Coloured, African &amp; Indian</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>26.1</b>

The growth in the numbers of black members of staff among our academic staff is very slow – it has increased from 8.8% to 10.9% over the three years, which is not very significant. However, one needs to keep in mind that the turnover of academic staff is very low – less than 5% per year. And if we look at *new* academic appointments that have been made since 2002, we find that approximately 27% of these are black people, and about 60% are women. Nevertheless, this is an area in which we are still trying to improve.

When it comes to the profile of women in management we can indeed show significant progress. Since the beginning of 2004, a number of women have been appointed to senior positions. Among these are the Dean of Theology (Prof. Elna Mouton), the Dean of Students (Dr Edna van Harte), the Director of Research (Prof. Petra Engelbrecht) and the Ombudsman (Ms Letitia Snyman).

In other areas of diversity we have had mixed success. I am pleased to report that we will be able to make a contribution to sport for disabled persons, through having been designated as the National Centre of Specialization for Disability Sports, and the centre of preparation for the national paralympic team which will compete in Athens in September. We have special equipment for disability sports that allows us to test and keep track of the athletes as they train. We welcome the increasingly visible presence of people with disabilities on our campus.

Regarding our institutional culture, I can say that there are encouraging signs that the limited, but undesirable, old culture of playing power games with newcomers in our residences is beginning to fade. For example, students from Helshoogte came forward this year on their own initiative to acknowledge that they were still carrying out outmoded initiation ceremonies and that they had come to realise that these clashed with the values of the University, which they themselves subscribe to.

## **5. Afrikaans**

We are in the process of building a new legitimacy for Afrikaans. It is a legitimacy that is based on Afrikaans across the boundaries of colour; Afrikaans as an instrument of empowerment; and Afrikaans that does not exclude itself, but stands shoulder to shoulder with other languages. This message is gradually taking root, even outside the ranks of the traditional supporters of Afrikaans. Consider for example the honorary degree ceremony that was held for President Thabo Mbeki in February this year. We used that occasion to present our Vision 2012 to the President and a number of senior members of the Cabinet – and with that also our commitment to Afrikaans. The answer to this honest exposure of our intentions was an equally honest acknowledgement of the positive role played by Stellenbosch in relation to Afrikaans. I quote from the President's speech:

We must also say that a healthy diversity among our universities allows for different language policies. Now that Afrikaans has been liberated from its narrow Afrikaner nationalist straight-jacket, Stellenbosch University must answer an important question – how can the University, as an academic and educational institution, equip and motivate Afrikaners and other citizens with Afrikaans as their first language to be participants in the common journey towards the birth of a united but diverse nation?

*In this context I must make the point that Afrikaans has already proved itself as a national asset, side by side with other linguistic assets. The use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction is part of the institutional diversity of which I have spoken.*

I would venture to say that, with this acceptance in principle of a tailor-made language policy for Stellenbosch by the Head of State himself, we have made considerable progress on the way to achieving a generally accepted Afrikaans language profile.

Regarding the implementation of the Language Policy: it is in progress, and we are learning as we go along. Our Language Committee is working hard and effectively, and reports to the Council as planned. We realised early on that there are a number of practical issues that will have to be addressed, such as the dissemination of information, student recruitment, staff appointments, international students, computer programs and so forth. At the start of this year, we began to use our Code of Conduct for language in the classroom and, except for the problem of bringing it to the attention of all concerned, we believe that it has resulted in greater clarity on mutual expectations.

It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the implementation of the Language Policy is being phased in, and therefore is only applicable to first-year students in 2004. This means that there are large numbers of senior students on campus who registered here before the current Language Policy had been put into effect. It is therefore only fair for us to take their circumstances and expectations into consideration. It is also necessary for us to guard against a new arrogance that could arise among Afrikaans speakers in the classroom.

I believe that the next phase of the debate about Afrikaans as medium of instruction at Stellenbosch is one that should be conducted in English. Evidently the debate about Afrikaans will continue in Afrikaans, but we need to make friends and influence people also amongst those who are perfectly capable of understanding the merits of our arguments about Afrikaans, but do not understand Afrikaans itself. Here I have in mind both the national and international context. I have often had the experience abroad of being asked "But do you still teach in Afrikaans?", in a tone of voice expressing disbelief. It would be very valuable then to have a reasoned exposition available, in English, of what we do, why we do it, and how we propose to carry on doing it. It will not suffice to have supporters of Afrikaans only amongst Afrikaans speakers – just as it would never do to have supporters of rugby only amongst rugby players. We are convinced of the value of providing undergraduate education in Afrikaans. At the same time we are conscious of our task to prepare students for the world of work, and to remain internationally competitive.

## **Part 2: Vision 2012 and Stellenbosch on a larger scale**

Stellenbosch University is not only the campus – it is also a much broader community. Or, to use another metaphor: Stellenbosch stands for an idea. What we hope to do is to adapt the idea for which Stellenbosch stands. The new idea of Stellenbosch that we want to promote is embodied in Vision 2012. And the achievement of Vision 2012 is our way of implementing transformation. Incidentally, nothing will be achieved by trying to avoid the word "transformation", or getting angry about it. It

is much better for us to give content to the word ourselves, as we are now doing by means of Vision 2012.

Two comments are relevant here. The first is that transformation is something that we choose to do, with the simple objective of being and remaining a good university. It is not something being forced upon us by the State, or the donors, or any political party, or some or other group behind the scenes. It is a conscious and well-considered decision that goes back to our Strategic Framework of 2000, and has since been spelled out in numerous policy and planning documents. In this regard I would like to give credit to our staff and students, the great majority of whom accept the necessity for transformation and have embraced the challenge of co-responsibility for Vision 2012.

The second remark is that transformation, in the sense in which we speak about it, is not a numbers game. It does not, in the first place, have to do with numbers or tables or graphs of how many people from the designated groups can be found on the Stellenbosch campus. Transformation, in the first instance, involves a mind-shift. It has to do with ideas. And it has to do with the idea of Stellenbosch.

In relation to this, I would specifically like to address former Maties from the pre-1994 era. The year 1994 is naturally a symbolic one for all South Africans – before that time we lived in a different country. But I would also like to address the pre-1994 alumni for another reason. These are people from our traditional support base who now find themselves in mid-career, or further. People who have used the benefit of studying at Stellenbosch and now hold management posts, or exert an influence, in many arenas and in many places across the world. To this group of former Maties I would like to say that transformation at Stellenbosch also has a lot to do with what *you* think about Stellenbosch, and what message *you* convey to your children, your friends, your fellow citizens and the world outside. A lot depends on how you view Stellenbosch's position, and your own position, in this new country that is celebrating its 10th birthday this year.

I would therefore like to make a direct appeal to the broader Stellenbosch community: support our transformation! We invite everybody from our traditional support base to walk the road with us toward Vision 2012. We ask for your active support for the new idea of Stellenbosch.

To realise our vision some mind-shifts are necessary. Many people have already made these mind-shifts – that is why we can present them as the voice of experience. I would therefore like to raise a few thoughts on what we believe is necessary, also from the ranks of our traditional support base, for achieving success with transformation. (This links up with a discussion I had with the *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* in Cape Town, where I also mentioned some such points. This talk is available on the rector's page of our website.)

1. We should please come to terms now with the fact that the Stellenbosch of today and tomorrow is and will be different from the Stellenbosch of yesterday – just as the South Africa of today is another country from what it was. There is still a yearning among many former Maties that Stellenbosch, of all places, should please remain untouched amidst the many changes that surround us. To give an example: I am often told by parents that they had a wonderful time at Stellenbosch 20 or 30 years ago, and that they would like their children to have the same experience. But we must be clear: it is not possible, and it is not necessary. We cannot offer our children the same

Matieland experience as we had – for the simple reason that the world of that experience no longer exists. We can still offer our children a good experience – but it will be a *different* experience to the one that you had: one that they might prefer, and one that will most probably better equip them for the future. We must not trip ourselves up with a romanticised image of the Stellenbosch of decades ago. For the insiders of that time it might have been heaven – but we now know that, to those who were then outsiders, Stellenbosch more often displayed its dark side. And it is particularly the children of those who then were outsiders who must now become co-owners of the Stellenbosch of tomorrow. Obviously we would like to build on what was good in the past – but not everything in the past was good, and not everything that is good belongs to the past.

The fact is that there are still those Afrikaners who would like to claim Stellenbosch University as a bastion of Afrikanerdom. We have no desire or intention to be anything of the sort. A bastion is designed to keep people out. That is not what we want to do. We have built into our Vision Statement that we wish to promote Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multi-lingual context. Our aim is to bring people in, not keep them out. Part of our delivering on that promise, therefore, consists of disengaging the language Afrikaans from the ideology of an encapsulated white Afrikanerdom.

2. We must learn to recognise and appreciate our successes. I recently received an e-mail from one of our top academics who had spent six months abroad, and I would like to quote from it:

On my return I was once again surprised and impressed with the great amount of news about the good things that had taken place on and around the campus in the past nine months, particularly concerning research. Two Centres of Excellence, a number of books by people from Stellenbosch that drew attention locally and internationally, and much more in the same vein. At the same time I was astonished by the really noticeable lack of publicity that those achievements (with a few exceptions) received in the local press ... This was a surprising and alarming impression.

Another example that comes to mind is the recent achievement of our Student Choir, which won the International Youth Choir Olympics in Bremen. Instead of congratulations, however, we saw that amongst the first media reaction to this achievement was an accusation that not enough attention had been paid to Afrikaans. The more we enter the new world as role players and competitors, the more we will find that we can achieve success in the new environment on the basis of hard work and merit. The more we encounter the diversity of people and ideas, and engage with it, the more we will empower ourselves to achieve true excellence. But then we must allow ourselves to spot and celebrate our own successes. We then need to realise that these successes stem in part from our new identity, and not complain that Stellenbosch is no longer what it used to be.

3. We should learn to not see a demon lurking behind every bush. It is not necessary for us to approach each contentious issue as though there were an unholy conspiracy behind it. My own experience is more the opposite: there is a great deal of goodwill towards Stellenbosch from beyond the circle of our traditional support base, and we are in the process of building a

new and more extensive support base. But we must be careful not to lose that goodwill through suspicion, pettiness and pugnacity. Of course there are many conflicting opinions about Stellenbosch, about transformation, about Afrikaans, about multilingualism, about political dispensations, and about many other things that form part of our consideration of the future of this country. But we need not see these as threatening. We should rather view difference of opinion as a fertile source of the diversity of ideas for which we strive

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to convey a very simple message to the traditional supporters of Stellenbosch: Relax! The world is not against us. Evidently there are forces that impact on us from all sides, and sometimes from in front. But that's the way it goes in a competitive and changing environment. In fact, we have more opportunities than problems. The world lies open before us.

In the first part of my talk I answered the question: "Where are we now?". Vision 2012 gives answers to the question "Where are we going?". On our journey towards Vision 2012 we would like to take all our traditional supporters along with us. We are grateful for the great majority of people who have already decided to walk the road with us. We remain committed to consultation and discussion on the question of "How do we get there?". But we cannot be shackled by those few who remain immovably attached to the reference point of "Where do we come from?". We cannot decline to move just to accommodate a historically romanticised image of Stellenbosch as an untouchable paradise. We invite everybody to accept the new idea of a Stellenbosch welcoming all, and to travel with us to Vision 2012.

I conclude on a lighter note. I would like to draw your attention to the case of the Cape parrot.

Cape parrots are a small minority in the bird kingdom of South Africa. They prefer to sleep in the same place every night, namely in yellowwood trees. And they prefer to eat the same food at every meal, namely the fruit of yellowwood trees. Unfortunately, however, the yellowwood trees are dwindling. Consequently, as long as the Cape parrot stubbornly clings to its eating and sleeping habits, it is increasingly becoming a threatened species, as its traditional habitat is getting smaller.

One feels like saying to the Cape parrot: Perhaps you could try to sleep in some other trees for a change? Perhaps you could try to eat some other fruit as well?. You could easily do so – and if you do, your future life might become more comfortable and more fulfilling. If you would only spread your wings with confidence, you will find a new and rewarding world opening up before you.



# INTRODUCTION TO WHOSE PLACE IS THIS?

November 2004

A change of consciousness is a painful process. Perhaps that is why many of the debates regarding Stellenbosch dealt with some or other symptom of that pain, rather than with its causes. The debate regarding the award of a posthumous honorary doctorate to Bram Fischer was of this nature. The outpouring of anger that followed the announcement of this honorary degree was a symptom of a deeper pain, namely the gradual loss of power and authority of those who wish to regard Stellenbosch as their place.

My judgment was that we should diagnose and address the real pain, rather than the symptom. I did so in the following address, delivered at the Convocation meeting of November 2004.

One sign of progress in a change of consciousness is when the same people who bitterly opposed a new idea at first later start propounding it as their own. The traditional Stellenbosch circle consisted, by definition, of Afrikaners, because of the history of the country and the University over the past few decades. The core of what I said in 2004 was that the time had arrived for these Afrikaners to relinquish their idea of sole ownership of Stellenbosch. That was not a popular message at the time. By the time I vacated the Vice-Chancellorship in 2007, however, it had become conventional wisdom amongst Afrikaners that Stellenbosch is not meant for Afrikaners only.

I am pleased about that, since it agrees with what I had said: "It is time for the older and smaller Stellenbosch community to relinquish the idea of sole ownership, and to share their sense of ownership with a newer and broader community". There are disconcerting signs, however, that the same thought process regarding ownership may repeat itself, this time only with "Afrikaners" replaced by "Afrikaans speakers". If that were to happen, we would remain trapped in an identity-driven exclusivity.

# Whose place is this?

## Convocation Meeting

11 November 2004

I believe it is time for us to penetrate to the real core of the various debates concerning Stellenbosch University. The core issue can be summarised in one word: *ownership*.

Whose place is this?

We cannot talk around this topic for ever. It is right and proper that we should debate about an honorary doctorate for Bram Fischer, or a residence placement policy, or employment equity. But we should also be able to penetrate to the real core question, otherwise we are not being honest with each other.

Whose place is this?

I can see two Stellenbosch University constituencies. One is an older constituency (and when I say "older" I refer not only to years) to whom ownership belonged, and for whom it remains precious. The other is a newer constituency (and when I say "newer" I do not only mean younger), who are increasingly and rightfully beginning to demand ownership as well. The older constituency actually falls within the newer one – but perhaps neither of the two have fully realised this as yet.

The older community is primarily an Afrikaner community. This circumstance arises from the kind of country we were before 1994, and from the fact that Stellenbosch was reserved for white Afrikaans-speakers for such a long time. The newer community is a broader university community, which extends across colour boundaries, across religious boundaries, across age boundaries, across gender boundaries, and across territorial boundaries. This new Stellenbosch community is primarily, but not exclusively, Afrikaans speaking. The newer community buys into the idea that, from the point of view of language, Stellenbosch University must serve *all* Afrikaans speakers, but not *only* Afrikaans speakers.

To be able to understand these nuances we must distinguish between Afrikaans, the language, and the concept of Afrikanerdom. No matter how you approach the issue, it finally boils down to one cardinal difference, and that is a difference in *reach* (or range). Afrikaans, the language, reaches across many boundaries of colour, culture and religion. Afrikanerdom, the concept, does not. This reality we should keep clearly in mind in the debates concerning Stellenbosch.

Let me add that the issue does not only concern colour. Colour creates stereotypes, which we should guard against. The issue also concerns older and newer mental frameworks and value systems. There are many Afrikaans-speaking white people who do not, as a matter of course, cling to the mental framework and value system of a narrow type of Afrikanerdom, and who feel comfortable within the newer and broader community.

The older community, consisting primarily of Afrikaners, believed for a long time, and some continue to believe, that Stellenbosch is *their* place – that its ownership is vested in them. The newer and broader community is increasingly pointing out that Stellenbosch is their place *as well*. The older community

is hesitant to give up its ownership, because it is uncertain what will happen to the inheritance that its members created. And the newer community is not entirely sure yet whether it wants to accept the responsibility of ownership, because that inheritance also carries a number of encumbrances.

For Afrikaans to secure its future, the reach of the language must be respected and everyone who speaks the language should be able to share in its ownership. For this reason, Afrikaans cannot be viewed as being the possession of Afrikaners only. And therefore, if Stellenbosch wants to be an agent for Afrikaans, Stellenbosch can also not be viewed as being the sole property of Afrikanerdom.

Many of us believe that Stellenbosch University can help to negotiate a sustainable space for Afrikaans in this country, provided that this space is non-exclusive. One of the dangers facing the future of Afrikaans, the language, is therefore too close an association with the concept of Afrikanerdom. And one of the dangers facing Stellenbosch University in its endeavour to build a new legitimacy for Afrikaans, the language, is posed by Afrikaners who, perhaps with the best intentions, speak and act as if their smaller group has sole ownership of this University.

It is easy to gain the impression that these people may be waving the flag for Afrikaans, but in essence are fighting for Afrikanerdom. And every time this happens, our task as a University becomes more difficult.

- Every time former functionaries of the pre-1994 dispensation speak as if this University and Afrikaans are the property of Afrikaners, it decreases our potential to be role players in the future of the country. For, if Afrikaners do not want to share this national asset with the rest of the country, on what grounds can they claim that the assets of the rest of the country should be shared with them?
- Every time a group of alumni acts as if they alone have a say in who the University's icons may or may not be, Stellenbosch shrinks in the eyes of South Africa and the world.
- Every time the achievement of a group of Maties in winning an international olympiad is met, not with congratulations, but with reproach that they did not do so in Afrikaans, more young people turn their back on the language.

The way to ensure our future is to reach outward and grow, not to reach inward and shrink. It is time for the older and smaller Stellenbosch community to let go of the idea of sole ownership, and to share ownership with others in a newer and broader community. It is time for that broader community itself to claim that ownership, on behalf of, and to the benefit of, our new country. The issue is not a surrendering of ownership, but an expansion.

And this is exactly what is happening – as has again been illustrated in the course of the most recent debate on Bram Fischer.

To be an Afrikaner-Matie does not disqualify one from membership of the newer and broader Stellenbosch community. On the contrary. This group is an inseparable part of what Stellenbosch wants to be. But not *only* them. Others as well.

The newer and broader community understands that Stellenbosch is precious, and that, for many people, it is the one place that they would still have liked to claim as exclusively theirs. We under-

stand that there is a feeling of loss, and of anger. We believe in the value of a diversity of ideas, and we therefore welcome debate. We are not afraid of incisive questions and criticism. But we remain committed to the belief that Stellenbosch deserves a broader circle of support than has been the case in the past. And that, backed by such a broader circle of support, Stellenbosch can mean more to a greater number of people and can play a bigger role in South Africa and in the rest of the world.

And now, what is the role of the statutory body known as the Convocation in this dynamic? The interesting fact is that it is precisely in the Convocation where one finds representation from both the older and the newer communities. This means that the Convocation can play a unique role in gradually erasing the remaining internal boundary between the two communities. I would like to think that it is in this organisation where the often divergent views and standpoints on broader issues concerning the place and role of Stellenbosch University in the South African society could be heard, and perhaps brought to consensus. I would like to think that the Convocation could create discussion forums where all the various voices could speak, and be heard. Management would gladly extend its support to such an effort by the Convocation.

Everyone who knows about Stellenbosch has respect for the University as an academic institution, and respects and appreciates what former Maties built up over many decades. We, as Management, accept the inheritance that we received from our predecessors, and we use it to the best of our ability. We try to deal responsibly with what we have inherited, while we build for the future. We believe that our more than one hundred thousand alumni are a priceless asset in this process. When the older community is seamlessly taken up into the newer community, we will be able to do so much more than in the past.

I am looking forward to such a future. And I hope that, tonight, we will not end a debate, but start a process.

# INTRODUCTION TO ON TRANSFORMATION AND QUALITY AT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

July 2005

In my annual public report of July 2005 I could for the first time show with the necessary data that academic quality at the University had been improving steadily over the same timeframe within which the University had gradually been opening its doors to the outside world. It was clear that quality and diversity went hand in hand. I was also able to give the results arising from a full-scale opinion poll regarding the change of consciousness about Stellenbosch University. And I could give the gist of the restructuring and rightsizing exercise which was to occupy us for much of the next year.

# On transformation and quality at Stellenbosch University

## Annual public speech,

27 July 2005

We have started a tradition that the Rector should deliver a public address annually to report on what is happening at the University. Like any other business, we also publish our annual report as a glossy brochure. My aim today, however, is to look further back in time, and particularly at the five years which have passed since the adoption of our Strategic Planning Framework in 2000. I wish to pose and address the question of transformation. What does it mean for us, why are we doing it, and what progress are we making?

### 1.

By way of introduction, I would like to read a statement made by one of our students in applying for the trip we organize annually for upcoming student leaders to campuses in the USA.

I am a black proud South African woman that prides herself in being an African, a South African, a Matie! ... I look forward to a time when my grandchildren will be Maties and I can say to them that I was one of the leaders of my time that pushed for diversity and multi-culturalism, cultural preservation and equality for all.

These words, and the enthusiasm emanating from them, strike me as an excellent summary of the progress we have made over the past few years in the transformation of the University. Here is a young African black woman, proudly claiming ownership of the name "Matie". Who would have thought this possible, even just a few years ago?

It is not my purpose, today, to spend much time on demographics. I may just observe that our slow but steady growth in black student and staff numbers is being maintained – and that, our black postgraduate student numbers have increased by more than 50% within 5 years, from less than 2 000 to more than 3 000. It is also not my purpose to give an intellectual analysis of what transformation is, or is about. Today I intend, rather, to deal with mindset changes, and how they fit into a pattern. For those who insist on definitions, let it suffice for today to say that transformation at Stellenbosch is concerned with attaining the goals of the Strategic Framework, as concretized in our Vision 2012, and adopted by Council in September 2003:

Stellenbosch University:

- Is an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner
- Contributes towards building the scientific, technological, and intellectual capacity of Africa
- Is an active role-player in the development of South African society

- Has a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas
- Promotes Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.

## 2.

At the time of my being appointed as Vice-Chancellor, in 2001, I had as a newcomer a strong first impression that views concerning Stellenbosch fell into just two categories: insider views, and outsider views. This was confirmed, to some extent, when soon after taking up appointment I read a detailed study by (what is now called) CREST, our Centre for Research in Science and Technology, on the experience of black students at Stellenbosch, which posited a "two cultures" phenomenon. It was also my initial impression that the insider view and the outsider view of Stellenbosch were very different, and that each side had a rather stereotypical view of the other. These stereotypes, moreover, engendered suspicion on both sides.

On the insider side there was fear that something precious would be despoiled, or lost. Fear that the "culture and traditions" of Stellenbosch would fall by the wayside. Fears that "standards will drop" and quality be compromised. There was suspicion that there were enemies out there, plotting the downfall of Stellenbosch; suspicion that a hostile agenda was being pursued by extraneous forces; suspicion that any change, however small, would become the thin end of the wedge. On the outsider side, on the other hand, there was a simple view of Stellenbosch as the last bastion of Afrikanerdom, stubbornly refusing to accept the realities, let alone the promise, of the new South Africa. You may recall, for example, the discussions of that time about initiation in the residences, which I think illustrated the mutual mistrust rather well.

The most important question to ask concerning transformation at Stellenbosch, therefore, is whether there has been any change in the mindset. Has there been a change of mind about Stellenbosch? And has there been a change of mind within Stellenbosch? Do people still think about this University in the same way as they did five or ten years ago?

I have already given you one view, namely that of the young black African woman who so proudly claims the title of Matie. I have also spoken at last year's Convocation meeting in November on what I called the *older constituency* and the *newer constituency*, and that the former was actually included within the latter. But to answer the question we need a broader base of response. We therefore commissioned an in-depth study during 2004 on the public perception of the Stellenbosch University brand, with particular reference to perceptions regarding transformation. The study was also carried out by CREST, who have a long track record and a proud reputation in studies of this nature. They defined four target groups (after a consultative process), and distributed more than 15,000 questionnaires in September 2004. Almost 6,000 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a very satisfactory response rate of almost 39%. The complete CREST report, with an executive summary, is available on the web at [www.sun.ac.za/mid2005](http://www.sun.ac.za/mid2005). The five main findings were as follows:

1. The University is viewed by the large majority of its stakeholders as an institution of quality, offering tuition and producing research of national and international standards.
2. As regards transformation, we can distinguish three groups:
  - a. Group 1 believes that transformation is happening, that it is being responsibly managed, and

that it is taking place with due regard to institutional culture and traditions.

- b. Group 2 agrees that transformation is happening, but believes that it is irresponsibly managed, at the expense of tradition.
  - c. Group 3 believes that transformation is not taking place, or much too slowly. And the percentages are as follows: Group 1 comprises 60% of respondents, Group 2 comprises 23%, and Group 3, 17%.
3. The majority of stakeholders believe the University's infrastructure and facilities to be of high quality, that its position and geographical environment are important drawcards, and that its campus life and culture are experienced as assets.
  4. The overwhelming majority (72-75%) believes that the Afrikaans language and culture are being maintained, with a smaller but still significant majority (58-66%) who believe that the University is a multi-cultural and inclusive institution.
  5. A majority of respondents believe that Stellenbosch University is an expensive place to study.

This is how we are perceived five years after starting to walk the transformation road. The CREST study shows that there is a strong middle ground – in fact, a dominant middle ground – between those who think we are doing too much, or moving too fast, and those who think we are doing too little, or moving too slowly. The *existence* of such a middle ground is heartening in itself. To find that the middle ground is actually *dominant* is good news indeed. It seems that the two cultures of a few years ago have not only started overlapping, but that the overlap has in fact become the dominant voice. This is the essence of our report card on mindset change five years after the Strategic Framework: that most of our constituents believe that transformation is in fact taking place, and that it is being responsibly managed.

This is not to say that we can afford to ignore the hopes and fears on the two ends of the spectrum of opinion. On the contrary, we should engage with such fears and perceptions on the basis of facts. I would like to do so with one particular issue for each of what I called above Group 2 and Group 3.

### 3.

Amongst many of our traditional constituency, manifested by Group 2 in the CREST Report, there is a recurrent fear that transformation will erode quality. Many Afrikaner alumni are of the view that Stellenbosch was always an outstanding university, but that it is now sadly in decline, or at least in imminent danger of decline, because of transformation. Two points can be made in response. The first is that during the long time of Afrikaner political dominance, Stellenbosch had no need to measure its own quality other than by its own yardstick. Inevitably, this led to an unsubstantiated self-image of overall excellence. Secondly, in terms of all the usual measurable parameters, academic quality at Stellenbosch has slowly but surely been *increasing* at the same time as the University started opening up to the outside world.



I would like to substantiate this claim of steady increase in academic quality with some facts and figures. In what follows, I will compare Stellenbosch to four other universities. I chose these because they have the same comprehensive academic offering as we do, including Engineering and Medicine.

For academics, perhaps the first measure of academic quality for a university that comes to mind is its output of refereed scholarly publications. As you can see from Figure 1, Stellenbosch University has sustained a steady rise in research publications per academic staff member over the 10 years since 1994. (I include, by way of comparison, also the as-yet unaudited figures for 2004, to show that the increase is still being maintained.)

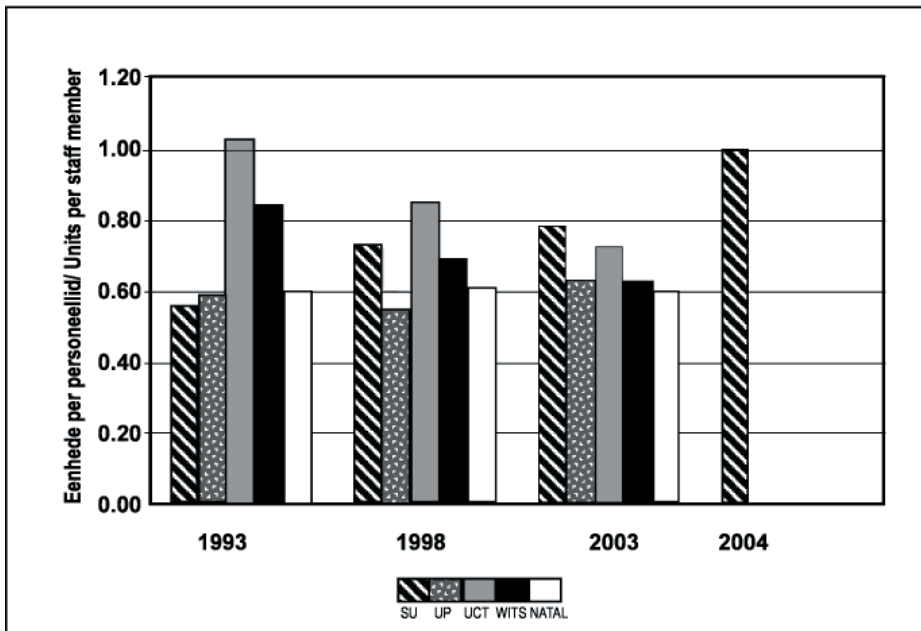


Figure 1: Research publications per permanent C1-staff member

A second common measure of academic quality is the number of doctorates awarded per academic staff member. Here, too, on the same time scale, we have a steadily increasing line.

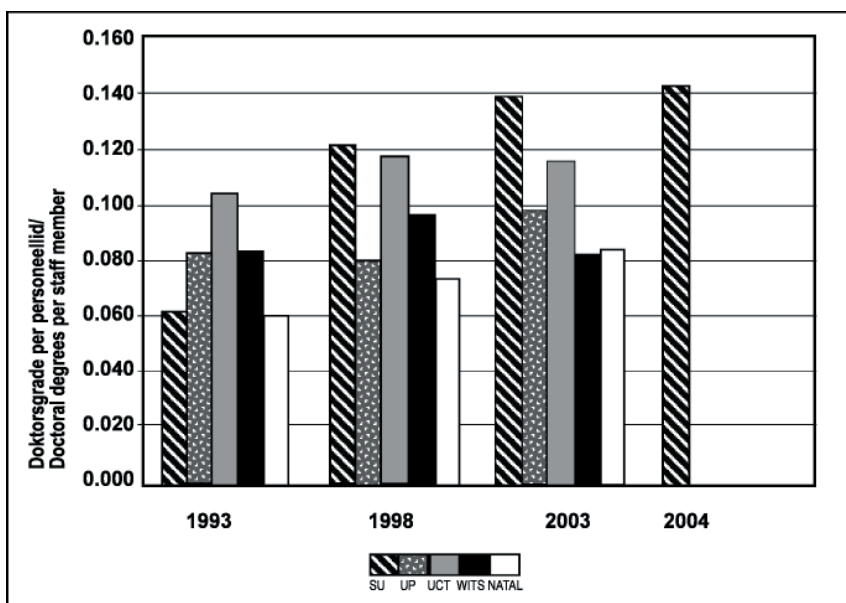


Figure 2: Doctoral degrees awarded per permanent C1-staff member.

A measure commonly used in South Africa to indicate the quality of researchers is the research ratings awarded to individuals by the National Research Foundation. It is clear from Figure 3 that there are two universities who are way ahead of the rest of the field in this respect: ourselves and UCT.

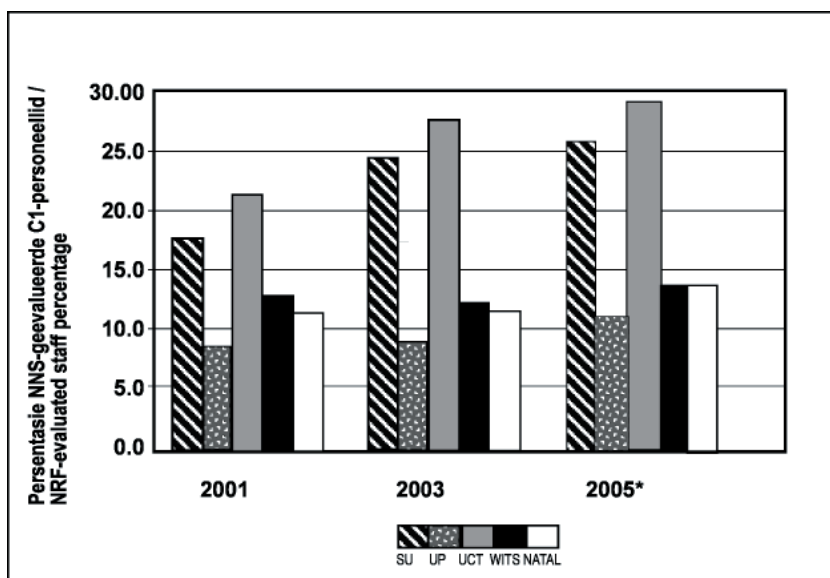


Figure 3: NRF-evaluated staff as a percentage of permanent C1-staff.

Our motto, as you know, is “Your knowledge partner” – a motto which fits very well with the point made by our Vision Statement on being a role player in society. We pride ourselves on our interaction with Business and Industry. And the extent to which we shape up in this regard, compared to other universities, can be measured by the extent of the so-called THRIP awards. These are funds awarded for goal-oriented research, provided more funds can be leveraged from Industry. As you can see from Figure 4, we are far and away the best performer in this regard.

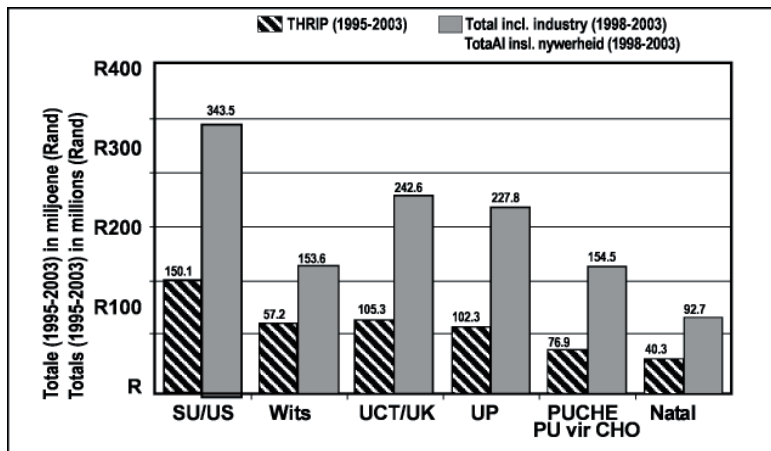


Figure 4: THRIP awards, and totals with industry funds included

There are many more things we can be proud of in the academic arena. More and more, our research centres operate in effect as national think tanks and centres of expertise. Our profile on the African continent is steadily rising, with a diverse number of well-functioning centres with an Africa focus. We awarded more Doctorates in 2004 than ever before. And recently we won the Department of Science and Technology's Award (and a cheque for R1 million) as the most technologically innovative Higher Education Institution in the country. I may also add that our overall donor funding has steadily risen over the past five years, as can be seen from Figure 5.

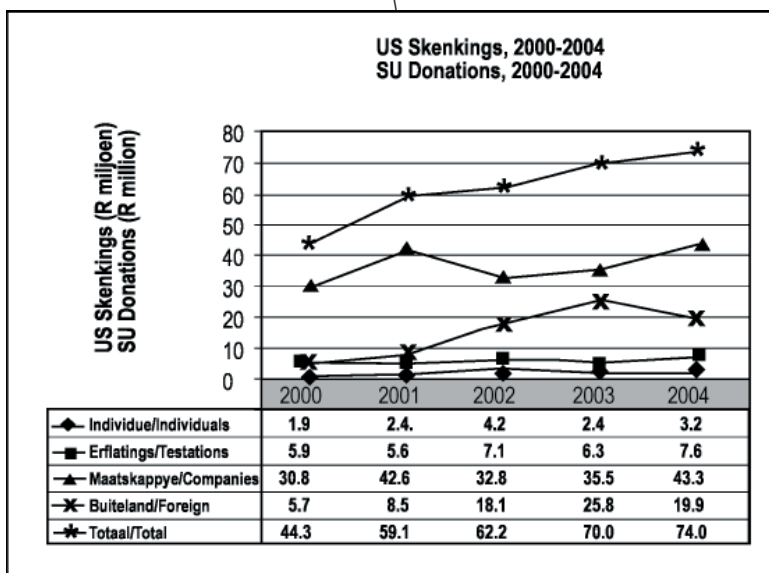


Figure 5: Donations (earmarked or not) over 5 years

To achieve at such a level, in the face of increasing pressure on the Higher Education sector, is a remarkable performance, for which our staff deserve all credit. We are absolutely committed to being good academics, and, debates on all other matters notwithstanding, this is where most of our energy goes – as it should. To those who were concerned that transformation would compromise academic quality we can therefore offer a very simple response: “Look at the scoreboard”.

#### 4.

I now turn to our newer constituency, one wing of which is represented by Group 3 in the CREST Report. Amongst many people in this group there is a stubborn belief that “old Stellenbosch” is a cohesive power block bent on maintaining the *status quo*, using money and language as mechanisms in a concerted effort to retain its exclusivity.

Contrary to that belief, I would like to put forward the view that, whatever internal cohesion there may have been within Afrikanerdom at the time of its political power, such unity of purpose is now largely a thing of the past. The debate amongst Afrikaners on their place in the emerging South African society, and in particular about Afrikaner identity, has reached what I would consider to be quite a healthy state of diversity of ideas. And this applies to opinions amongst Afrikaners regarding Stellenbosch University as well – as can be seen from the details of the CREST report.

It is true that what the CREST Report identifies as Group 2, those who think that transformation at Stellenbosch is being recklessly implemented – and who I have called the older constituency – still

has a substantial voice in the Afrikaans press, particularly in our provincial newspaper *Die Burger*. In a study I commissioned of the letters pages of *Die Burger* (available on the web at [www.sun.ac.za/mid2005](http://www.sun.ac.za/mid2005)), it transpired that Stellenbosch University remains a topic of interest considered to be of somewhat the same level of importance as crime or security. Between 2002 and 2005, the letters column of *Die Burger* published about 200 letters per annum concerning Stellenbosch University, with the greater majority of them expressing a negative view of whatever was happening at the University. However, in the light of the CREST report, we have to conclude that the negative voice speaking from the letters pages of *Die Burger* cannot represent the majority opinion of our stakeholders.

The debates in the Afrikaans press also illustrate what may be called the language trap. Whatever may be the merits or demerits of debates concerning transformation at Stellenbosch, or about Afrikaans, or Afrikaner identity more generally, as long as these debates are conducted only in Afrikaans they remain trapped within the Afrikaans community itself. This is why I have argued publicly that if the proponents for Afrikaans language rights really wish to make an impact, they should conduct their arguments in English as well.

This brings me to the *language issue*. It is almost impossible to say something about transformation at Stellenbosch without saying something about the issue of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at the University. No other Stellenbosch issue stirs up strong emotions as quickly as does the language issue. Indeed, we always have to be careful that our Language Policy not be used, on either side of the spectrum of opinion, to strengthen the very myths and stereotypes that we are trying to move away from.

I spoke on the language issue at some length in my annual Report of last year, and all of those comments are still applicable. I repeat that our approach to the issue of Afrikaans is a pragmatic rather than a dogmatic one. Language is not a problem to be solved, but an issue to be managed. Afrikaans at Stellenbosch must be seen not only against the background of our history, but against a much broader context: the role of English in a globalised world, the issues faced by Universities anywhere who deal with multilingualism, the Constitutional guarantee of "parity of esteem" for our 11 national languages, the educational needs of our students, and many other parameters. A regard for Afrikaans should not be interpreted automatically as a disregard for transformation. We acknowledge our responsibility both towards Afrikaans and towards the imperatives of transformation, and we grapple with the issue on a continuous basis.

I would like to mention a few instances of this grappling with the language issue and of developments on a wider front.

- Since my last annual report, I have personally undertaken a language study tour abroad, visiting a number of Universities in Europe and Canada where multilingualism is part of institutional practice. My full report, with the conclusions reached, has served before Council as a benchmarking exercise. (It is available on the web at [www.sun.ac.za/mid2005](http://www.sun.ac.za/mid2005), and will be published – jointly with Dr Christa van der Walt – in the *South African Journal of Higher Education*.) The study tour has enabled us to compare the situation of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch with that of other small languages internationally, for example Dutch or Finnish. It also helps us to understand the levels

of complexity – not to mention the investment of time, expertise and money – that multilingual universities have to make. I may point out that monolingual universities have an advantage in not having to pay this kind of “language tax”.

- At national level we interact with PANSALB as well as with the Department of Education. You may recall that PANSALB's National Language Body for Afrikaans held a *Nasionale Taalberaad* here at Stellenbosch in August last year. I gave an Opening Address at that meeting. All of what I said can be found on our website, at [www.sun.ac.za/mid2005](http://www.sun.ac.za/mid2005) , but I would like to repeat one point here which I regard as crucial. This is that there is a fundamental asymmetry between English and our other 10 national languages. English is an international language, and we need it not only to communicate amongst ourselves, but also to be internationally competitive. The other ten languages, including Afrikaans, are indigenous languages, and through our Constitution we have made a commitment to maintaining and enhancing them. It follows that Afrikaans should ally itself with the other indigenous languages in pursuing this aim. Indeed, an argument has recently been made for the protection and enhancement of the other nine indigenous (African) languages in terms not too far removed from some of the arguments that have been made by proponents of Afrikaans. I refer to the report by a Ministerial Committee headed by Prof Njabulo Ndebele, titled *The Development of Indigenous African Languages as Mediums of Instruction in Higher Education*. Likewise, earlier this year our Minister of Education had a very constructive discussion with the rectors of the five Historically Afrikaans universities on what other universities can learn from our experience in practicing multilingualism.
- Within the University, we have done a lot of work on the issue of language during the past semester. Towards the end of 2004, Council requested a report on perceptions regarding the implementation of the language policy since 2004. The study was conducted by our Centre for Teaching and Learning, who produced a comprehensive report, which was in turn considered in great depth by the Language Committee of Council. After a considerable amount of additional work done under the auspices of the Vice-Rector (Teaching), under whose jurisdiction the matter falls, Council eventually decided that a thorough 3-year review of the language policy should be conducted during 2006/2007, with a view towards any possible changes taking effect in 2008. In the mean time the language policy should be flexibly implemented, with due regard for the different scenarios faced by our various Faculties, and the learning difficulties of our students. I hope that this decision by Council will go a long way towards meeting the concerns of black students brought to our attention this year by ANCYL and SASCO. We acknowledge that we have a responsibility towards all our students to work with them in addressing whatever difficulties they may have with the prerequisites of learning, whether that be accommodation, money, mathematics or language.

Overall, I think we can say that the language issue has softened over the past few years from fairly intransigent ideological positions to a much more nuanced and pragmatic view. There is a growing consensus that 10 of our 11 languages are faced by a real and legitimate problem: how do you construct a safe space for a small indigenous language against the overwhelming presence of a large

international language? And there is a growing perception that the reality of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction at University is an interesting case study of the practicalities of trying to do so.

## 5.

I would now like to talk about another practical aspect of transformation. Transformation is not just about institutional culture, or language, or diversity, or access, or affirmative action. It is also about how we conduct our business, and how we re-design our business processes. Part of transformation is to streamline the university into an organization where our strategic goals can be pursued in a context of efficiency, cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability. This aspect of transformation, too, has been given serious attention at our university over the past few years.

By way of background it is instructive to note how the pressure on universities in South Africa has increased over the past few years. Firstly, the university system has had to accommodate a significant increase in student numbers, without a corresponding increase in academic staff. That means that student/staff ratios have increased significantly, putting additional pressure on academics. According to figures issued by the Department of Education, the student/staff ratio in the university sector (technically measured as "teaching input units to FTE teaching/research staff") was 33.3 in 2000, 36.7 in 2001, 38.5 in 2002 and 41.5 in 2003.

Secondly, the increase in student/staff ratios have not been accompanied by any increase in funding. On the contrary, the state subsidy per student has declined significantly in real terms over the past few years, as is shown by the Figures 6 and 7.

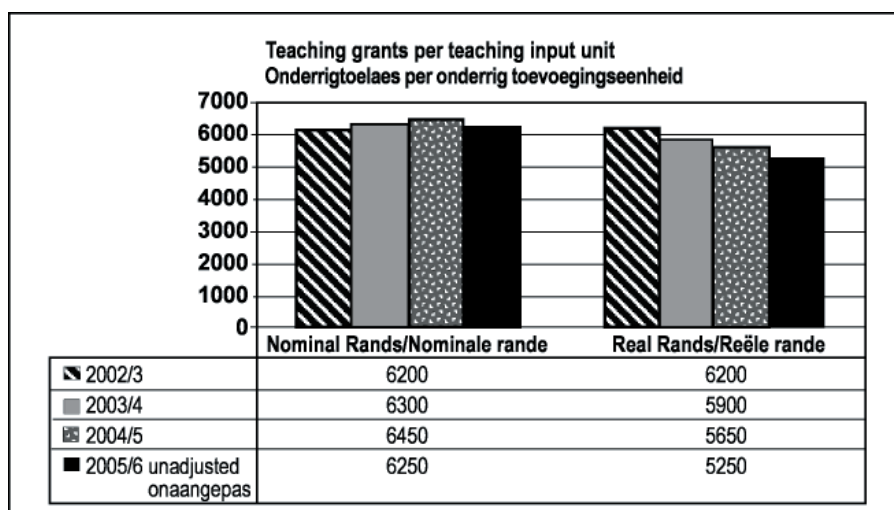


Figure 6: Teaching grants per teaching input unit

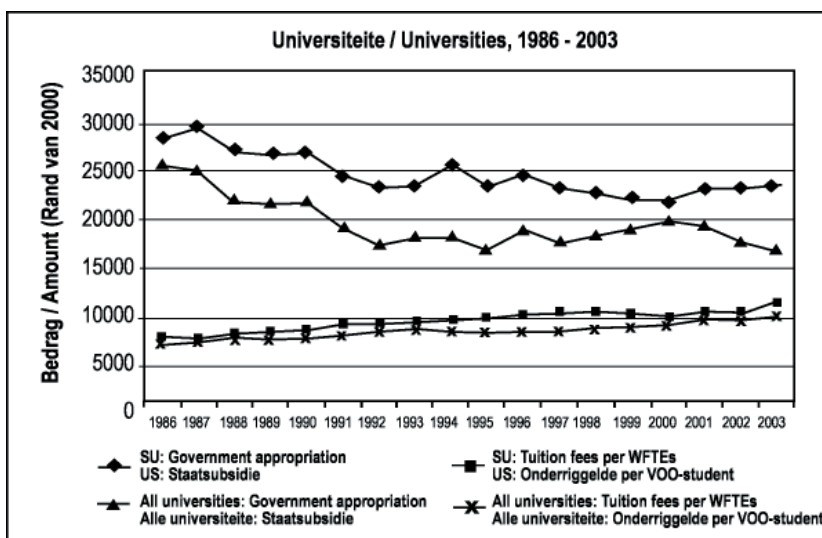


Figure 7: Real state subsidy and tuition fee income per weighted FTE student

I have to add at this stage, however, that one perception pointed out by the CREST Report should be qualified. That is, namely, that Stellenbosch is an expensive place at which to study. "Expensive" is of course a relative term, and as Figure 8 shows we are certainly not more expensive than most of our peers.

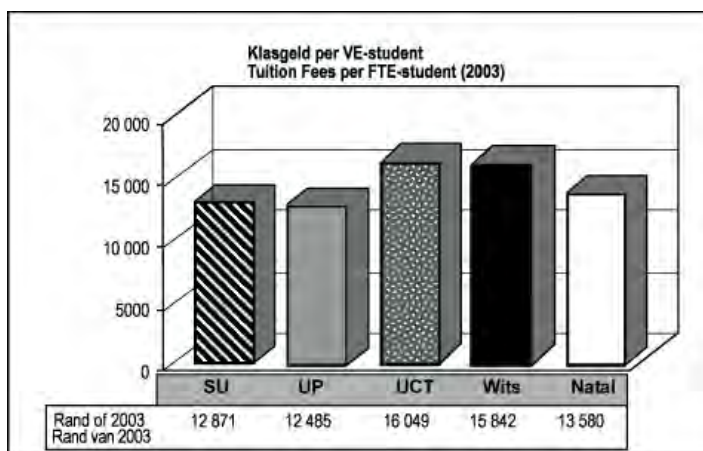


Figure 8: Tuition fees per FTE student, comparatively



At Stellenbosch the trends of increasing staff/student ratios and declining subsidy income per student have been evident for some time. Then, at the end of 2003, we had an unmistakable wake-up call, when despite our most conservative estimates, our subsidy grant for 2004 turned out to be significantly lower than what we had budgeted for. Since then we have spent considerable time and effort on developing a Business Plan for the University. A number of projects in this regard came to a head in June of this year, when Council approved a comprehensive rightsizing exercise for the entire University. A number of these proposals are now in the formal consultation phase, but I can give an outline here as I did in a letter to all staff following the Council meeting.

- We will position ourselves as a comprehensive, research-intensive, medium-sized university. We intend to stabilize our undergraduate numbers, and grow our postgraduate and research numbers. Without altering our current structure of 10 Faculties, we will direct our planning in terms of four categories of academic activities:
  - Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) – in our case including the importance of Stellenbosch as a locus of expertise in Agriculture.
  - Health Sciences
  - Humanities
  - Economic and Management Sciences

We acknowledge that, from a business point of view, the first two categories in particular are faced by a number of problems. These are all high-cost disciplines, where special effort must be made to ensure financial sustainability. These are also typically the areas in which the pool of prospective students, in particular black students, is not large. And these are areas requiring sound mathematical skills, and where drop-out rates can be distressingly high. However, we also believe that the SET and Health Sciences Faculties are of national importance. Accordingly, we would like to focus on these areas over the next three years, with a view towards increasing academic excellence and attaining financial sustainability.

- Low or differentiated throughput rates have been identified as a problem in the Higher Education sector, and while our throughput rates compare well with those of our peers, we believe that in pursuit of increased academic efficiency we should make a special effort towards improving them. In particular, we would like to focus on increasing the throughput rate of first-year students, where the issue manifests itself most clearly.

For this purpose we plan a cross-cutting "Foundation Faculty", which will take responsibility for the synchronization and coordination of first-year education across the University. We already have a Centre for Academic Support, and we plan to integrate their work with a specific management portfolio of first-year teaching in every Faculty. It is well-known that low throughput rates in first year correlate with problems regarding basic skills in numeracy, academic literacy, and computer use, and so the Foundation Faculty will need to consolidate our support structures in this regard. In addition, it will play an important role in our tutor and mentor programmes, early warning systems, assessment procedures, fall-back options, timetabling and other practicalities.

- We have established an annual cycle of planning and budgeting on a 3-year horizon, and within the annual budget we have created a Strategic Fund that is used as a central steering mechanism in pursuit of our strategic goals. For 2005, for example, a substantial part of our Strategic Fund will go towards rightsizing and restructuring initiatives in the SET areas and the proposed Foundation Faculty. Noting the slow progress in increasing staff diversity, we have also earmarked a certain proportion of the Strategic Fund for this purpose.

I have spoken of one aspect of transformation being how we conduct our business, and how we streamline our business processes. In doing so, there is one very important aspect that we must remember. Namely, at a university, and at this university in particular, staff members should not be viewed just as employees – they should be viewed as shareholders. Quite apart from the well-known academic argument for this view, namely that a university is a community of scholars, there is also a compelling practical argument supporting this view. That is, namely, that more and more of the annual turnover of the university comes, neither from the state subsidy nor from student fees, but from the hard intellectual labour of the academics themselves. Over the past 5 years, more than one-third of the total business of the University came neither from the state nor from student fees. What this means, and this is a point I believe Government should take note of, is that in pressing for transformation of the universities, there must be an acceptance of the fact that to some extent academics, collectively, are working for themselves. That means that market forces are something that play a role in transformation. It is not just a matter of making policy, and using governmental levers to implement policy. It is also a matter of reading market trends, and responding to them.

## 6.

All in all, I can report that five years after the adoption of our Strategic Framework our academic profile is good and steadily rising, transformation is taking place (albeit slowly in some respects), we are getting a better grip on the business end of the university, and many of the fears and suspicions regarding institutional culture prevalent a few years ago have started to subside.

Consider, for example, the issue of initiation in our residences. Whereas a few years ago this was a hot topic of discussion, we now seem to have left the issue largely behind us. Without claiming that we have eliminated the problem entirely, I think we can say that the mindset that gave rise to unacceptable practices has shifted into a more positive mode. Earlier this year, for example, two of our residences channeled what in the past would have been in-house bonding activities into a successful house-building project in Kayamandi. And during 2004 a group of students in one of our men's residences came forward voluntarily with an exposé of unacceptable practices of the past, and a commitment to measuring themselves in future against a different value system.

In fact, I believe we should give credit to our students, and acknowledge the quality of our student leadership, for their role in promoting and supporting the transformation agenda. We try to foster and enhance this role through initiatives such as the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds, and the annual Student Leaders' Tour to the USA. But it is only fair to say that in some respects the students are leading the way, rather than following from behind. Here too I can quote the words of one of our students:

I used to see diversity as a threat to tradition and culture. Only now do I realise how strong traditional Afrikaans culture in our university is and how difficult it is for someone from a different background to become part of it. We isolate ourselves from wonderful and rich cultures. It is of utmost importance to break these barriers and to create a place where everyone can feel at home to make the most of our study years and prepare ourselves to be influential in the world.

"To create a place where everyone can feel at home, and to prepare ourselves to be influential in the world" – what better summary could there be of our transformation agenda, and attaining Vision 2012? In my view, we have really only just begun. We are only beginning to see, let alone realize, our true potential. The figures I have shown you, and the trends that are clear from those figures, speak volumes. We are succeeding. There is a whole world out there where Stellenbosch can and should be seen as a leading university.

To do so, we should escape from our fears and suspicions. I spoke at the outset about my impression four years ago of a climate of suspicion and mistrust. I think – I hope – that we are gradually moving away from that climate. It is not necessary, and probably not desirable, for all of us to agree with each other all the time. But it would be really helpful if we could disagree, when we do, without being mistrustful of each other's motives. If the old and the new constituencies of Stellenbosch could engage each other directly, from a standpoint of mutual trust, then transformation and quality could both be increased even more than they have done over the past few years. I look forward to the day, for example, when the ANC Youth League and the Convocation would engage directly with each other on something like the language issue, rather than each engaging from their own corner only with the University management.

Transformation is a mind game, more than a numbers game. Stellenbosch can play that mind game with the greater South African Society in adversarial mode, or in collaborative mode. We have chosen the latter, and made an investment in trust. The CREST Report shows that most of our stakeholders support that investment in trust, and the figures I have shown illustrate the returns we are getting from that investment. In this regard, and in conclusion, I would like to quote that eminent Stellenbosch thinker and philanthropist, Dr Anton Rupert, when he said more than 50 years ago

Trust is a risk, but mistrust is an even greater risk.

Let us make sure that Stellenbosch will continue to choose the lesser risk.

# INTRODUCTION TO PREFACE TO STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY SELF-EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE HEQC 2005

In South Africa the national Department of Education has an independent advisory body called the Council on Higher Education (CHE). One of the tasks of the CHE is to carry out regular institutional audits, and the body that does so is called the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Such audits are a well-known feature of the higher education system in many countries. What makes the South African system a little different is that an audit does not directly focus and pronounce on the academic quality of the university per se, but rather evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms that the university has in place. That in turn relates to the vision and mission of the university, and the extent to which planning and policy support the declared aims of the university.

What that means in practical terms is that an HEQC audit is a complex and lengthy process, which leaves no aspect of the university unexamined, whether that be structural or functional. It is important, therefore, that members of the audit panel coming to the university should have a proper understanding, not only of how the wheels of the university turn, but also of what it is the University is trying to accomplish, and why. The way this is done is that a university due to be audited submits a comprehensive self-evaluation report, which panel members then study before they arrive for their audit visit.

Our self-evaluation report for the HEQC was prepared during 2005. What follows is the Preface I wrote for that Report. It was intended to give outsiders some idea, within a few pages, of what Stellenbosch University had been, was at that time, and could be in future.

# Preface to Stellenbosch University is Self-Evaluation Report for the HEQC

In my Inaugural Lecture<sup>1</sup> as Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in 2002, I raised four questions:

- Where do we come from?
- Where are we now?
- Where do we wish to be?
- How do we get there?

The first question "Where do we come from?" is one concerning historical background, and should be considered by anybody trying to understand this University.<sup>2</sup> Stellenbosch is remarkable in many respects. It is, after Cape Town, the oldest European settlement in South Africa. It lies in an area of breathtaking natural beauty. The University goes back to the founding of a theological seminary for the Dutch Reformed Church in 1859, and the *Stellenbosse Gymnasium*<sup>3</sup> of 1866 (renamed Victoria College in 1887). It was formally founded in 1918 as an independent University, against all odds, to serve Afrikaners, at a time when British imperialism – political, cultural and linguistic – seemed to have triumphed in Southern Africa. The University became the nexus where Afrikaans was turned from a local patois into a language of literature and science. Some of the great Afrikaner enterprises started in Stellenbosch.<sup>4</sup> For a time, the name Stellenbosch was practically synonymous with the sport of rugby in South Africa. And then, of course, Stellenbosch was one of the main intellectual sources of apartheid.<sup>5</sup>

The association of the University with the power structures of Afrikanerdom was, for a long time, a close one. DF Malan, the first apartheid prime minister, was a Stellenbosch man. Hendrik Verwoerd was a professor of Sociology and Social Work here, before turning to politics. John Vorster was a prominent Matie student leader, who later, as Prime Minister, became Chancellor of the University. P.W. Botha, likewise, became Chancellor at the peak of his political power (even though he had no former connection with the University). Rectors of the University, typically, were prominent members of the Afrikaner Broederbond.

But Stellenbosch also produced a number of luminaries who found themselves outside the fold of a structured and inward-looking Afrikanerdom. One of them was General Jan Smuts, who, as Prime Minister of South Africa, also assumed the role of world statesman during the first half of the 20th century. On a more general level, and despite the University's ties with the apartheid state, Stellenbosch produced a number of significant intellectuals who, in varying degrees,<sup>6</sup> questioned the apartheid dogma: Beyers Naude, Nico Smith, Johan Degenaar, André du Toit, Hermann Giliomee, S.P. Cilliers, Nic Olivier, Zyl Slabbert, Willie Esterhuyse, Sampie Terreblanche, André Odendaal and Johann Kinghorn.

In 1989, after the departure of P.W. Botha from the political scene, the University slowly started, on a symbolic level at least, to loosen its ties with the existing power structures – for example through the appointment of a “non-political” Chancellor, in the person of J.G. van der Horst of Old Mutual. By this time the notion of Stellenbosch as *volksuniversiteit*<sup>7</sup> had already lost much of its former gloss, and increasingly ideas emphasising the universalistic nature of a university, without necessarily sacrificing all particularistic elements, became part of the discourse.<sup>8</sup> With the formal loss of Afrikaner parliamentary power in 1994 and the transition to dominant African National Congress rule, Stellenbosch experienced a concomitant loss of pre-eminence in the world view of the new incumbents of power. It is fair to say that for the remainder of the 1990s, despite some internal realignments, the University kept a relatively low profile in national developments and debates. Thus the creative energy unleashed in the Higher Education sector post-1994 largely passed Stellenbosch by – there never was, for example, the kind of “Broad Transformation Forum” that other universities established. There was, however, a sufficient number of transformation-minded academics to press for, and come up with, a Strategic Planning Framework<sup>9</sup> in 2000. The laudable, if somewhat non-specific, sentiments in favour of transformation expressed in this document are still official University policy.

This leads to question 3: “Where do we wish to be?” In answer to this question the University community in 2003 formulated a simple 5-point statement, called Vision 2012, concretising the sentiments of the Strategic Framework, and giving Stellenbosch University a compass for transformation. The statement reads as follows.

Stellenbosch University:

- *is an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner*
- *contributes towards building the scientific, technological, and intellectual capacity of Africa*
- *is an active role-player in the development of South African society*
- *has a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas*
- *promotes Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.*

Against this background we can respond also to the second and fourth questions above. The second question (“Where are we now?”) deserves particular attention, because it relates also to where we are *perceived* to be, and *by whom*. I dealt with the latter aspect in my address to Convocation<sup>10</sup> of November 2004, at a time when emotions were running high about the University’s decision to award an Honorary Doctorate, posthumously, to Bram Fischer.<sup>11</sup>

Where we are perceived to be depends on whom you ask. We still find ourselves with two different Stellenbosch constituencies, responding in different ways to the question: “Whose place is this?”. I characterised these two constituencies as follows:

I can see two Stellenbosch University constituencies. One is an older constituency (and when I say “older” I refer not only to years) to whom ownership belonged, and for whom it remains precious. The other is a newer constituency (and when I say “newer” I do not only mean younger), who are increasingly and rightfully beginning to demand ownership as well. The older constituency actually falls within the newer one – but perhaps neither of the two have fully realised this as yet. The older community is primarily an Afrikaner community. This circum-

stance arises from the kind of country we were before 1994, and from the fact that Stellenbosch was reserved for white Afrikaans-speakers for such a long time. The newer community is a broader university community, which extends across colour boundaries, across religious boundaries, across age boundaries, across gender boundaries, and across territorial boundaries. This new Stellenbosch community is primarily, but not exclusively, Afrikaans speaking. The newer community buys into the idea that, from the point of view of language, Stellenbosch University must serve all Afrikaans speakers, but not only Afrikaans speakers.

The older community, consisting primarily of Afrikaners, believed for a long time, and some continue to believe, that Stellenbosch is *their* place – that its ownership is vested in them. The newer and broader community is increasingly pointing out that Stellenbosch is *their* place as well. The older community is hesitant to give up its ownership, because it is uncertain what will happen to the inheritance that its members created. And the newer community is not entirely sure yet whether it wants to accept the responsibility of ownership, because that inheritance also carries a number of encumbrances.

Dealing with transformation in an environment with two constituencies has its challenges. One such challenge is that interest in our affairs within the two constituencies is often expressed against the background of entrenched stereotypes within those constituencies. And the challenge is heightened by the fact that the myths and stereotypes prevalent in one constituency are sometimes diametrically opposed to myths and stereotypes in the other constituency.

In the newer constituency, there remains, for example, a persistent view that: (a) Stellenbosch University is trying to maintain itself as a bastion of Afrikanerdom, and (b) that it is doing so with the financial support of its alumni. The facts show otherwise, both as regards our declared intentions<sup>12</sup> and in terms of financial figures. In my Public Report of 2003<sup>13</sup> I pointed out that during the five preceding years we had never received donations from more than 5% of our alumni. Also, during those five years the donations from alumni in any given year never amounted to more than 8% of the total donations – in a typical year this figure was under 6%.

The older constituency retains many of the longstanding Afrikaner networks, and within these networks there are often internal developments and debates of which the broad South African community remains unaware.<sup>14</sup> The extent to which Stellenbosch University features in such internal debates, the entrenched belief system about what Stellenbosch *is* and *is supposed to be*,<sup>15</sup> and the many anxieties about developments here may come as a surprise to those who do not habitually read the Afrikaans newspapers.<sup>16</sup> For example, many Afrikaner alumni are of the view that Stellenbosch had always been an outstanding university, but that it is now sadly in decline, or at least in danger of decline, because of transformation. Two points can be made in response. Firstly, during the time of Afrikaner political dominance, Stellenbosch had no need to measure its own quality other than by its own yardstick; inevitably, this led to an unsubstantiated self-image of overall excellence.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, in terms of all the usual measurable parameters, academic quality at Stellenbosch has slowly, but surely, been *increasing* since the time that the University started opening up to the outside world.<sup>18</sup> My own view is that *quality needs diversity*<sup>19</sup> – and that the diversity we need most is diversity of ideas.

That raises the more factual aspects of the response to the question "Where are we now?". We are a comprehensive, research-intensive, medium-sized university, with all the advantages of a classic university town. When measured in terms of the usual parameters of academic performance, we would usually rank within the top five universities in the country, and often within the top three.<sup>20</sup> For example:

- The number and quality of our researchers, as measured by NRF ratings, have increased consistently over the past decade. We now have the second largest number of NRF-rated researchers in the country.
- We have been the top performer in South Africa in terms of THRIP funding for a number of years, indicating the extent of our collaboration with Business and Industry. Recently we won the DST Innovation Fund's national Award for the Technologically Most Innovative University in South Africa.
- A number of our research centres, such as the Bureau for Economic Research, the Centre for Research on Science and Technology, the Desmond Tutu TB Centre and the Centre for Invasive Biology, in effect operate as national think tanks and centres of expertise.
- We now have, or participate in, a diverse number of well-functioning centres with an Africa focus, such as the Africa Centre for Investment Analysis, the African Centre for the Management of HIV/AIDS in the Workplace, the African Sustainable Natural Plant Products Centre, the Network of African Congregational Theology, and the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences.
- Our students do well in national competitions. For example, we seem to have a stranglehold on the annual Budget Competition, which students from Stellenbosch have won five times in the past seven years.

These examples illustrate that the slogan on our letterhead, "Your Knowledge Partner", is something that we truly strive to live up to. More broadly, the point is that we are gradually beginning to realise our Vision 2012. But this is more than just a natural evolutionary process. It is also a process that must be steered and managed. And that brings us to the fourth question: if Vision 2012 is where we want to be, then "How do we get there?"

We have put in place a simple top Management structure in which, besides the Rector, there are only five senior managers. These are the three Vice-Rectors (Research, Teaching, and Operations), and the two Executive Directors (Finance and Innovation). Each of these persons manages a large portfolio of the University's affairs, and a large slice of the budget. The ten Faculty Deans interact with these managers individually within their line function, and collectively in the Executive Committee of Senate.

We believe that one of the strongest levers for effecting change is the budget. Accordingly, we have started building up, in the annual budget, a substantial Strategic Fund, which is administered under the aegis of the top Management by the Executive Director for Finance. Roughly half our budget goes directly to the Faculties, where it is managed by the Deans. However, we also retain a number of academic functions under central control. Examples include Academic Support Services and the Language Centre, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Vice-Rector (Teaching); Research Support Services and Library Services under the Vice-Rector (Research); and Community Interaction under the



Vice-Rector (Operations). In addition, Information Technology falls under the Executive Director for Innovation, as does Telematic Education. The Executive Director for Finance also has line management responsibility for Institutional Planning, on the principle that planning and budgeting must go hand in hand.

Another lever for transformation is to put in place, for academic and non-academic managers, annual performance contracts which include responsibility for institutional goals. Thus, for example, promoting staff diversity and employment equity are responsibilities of all managers in all sections. The Rector's Management Team is complemented by one of the Deans, who has particular responsibility for liaison with the faculties. Our weekly meetings are attended by a small but highly effective support team: the Dean of Students (to keep in touch with student affairs), the Registrar (on academic administration), the Communications Manager (for information flow) and the Projects Manager (for strategic project management purposes). Of these 11 people, known as the "Thursday Group", one is a black woman, two are white women, three are black men, and five are white men.

Since 2002 we have put in place a range of policies and procedures with a transformation agenda. These include policies on research, teaching, community interaction, innovation and commercialisation, risk management, equity, diversity and language. We also have a quality assurance policy, and indeed we see quality assurance as another one of the levers of transformation. We have an institutional Business Plan, which is updated annually, to give effect to these policies and procedures. Likewise, each Faculty has a Business Plan. Once a year, during the first semester, these Faculty plans are calibrated against the institutional plan and vice versa. The updated Business Plans of the University and the Faculties then inform the annual budgeting process during the second semester.

Of course, change does not happen mechanistically. For example, Stellenbosch has a very strong tradition of what is called "the collegial model", demanding a strong bottom-up component in any process of change. This means that some of the very structures that may require change would have a substantial say in changes affecting them. Moreover, that part of the older constituency situated outside the University (many of whom are alumni or former staff members) often assume the same rights of participation, as a consequence of their sense of ownership.

This gives rise to some interesting situations. In particular, no other Stellenbosch issue stirs up strong emotions in our two constituencies as quickly as does the issue of language. The Language Policy of the University has assumed almost mythical proportions, sometimes used on either side of the spectrum to strengthen the very stereotypes that we are trying to move away from. The fact is that we take a pragmatic approach rather than a dogmatic one: language is not a problem to be solved, but an issue to be managed. Afrikaans at Stellenbosch must be seen against a much broader context: the role of English in a globalised world, the issues faced by universities anywhere which deal with multilingualism,<sup>21</sup> the Constitutional guarantee of "parity of esteem" for our 11 national languages, the educational needs of our students, and many other parameters. A regard for Afrikaans should not be interpreted automatically as opposition to transformation. We acknowledge our responsibility towards both Afrikaans and the imperatives of transformation, and we grapple with the language issue on a continuous basis.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, more generally, we adopt a pragmatic approach to issues of institutional culture. It takes time for the older constituency to accept that simply saying "our doors are open" is not sufficient. The open door must be accompanied by some inducement for people to walk through it, and by a willingness of insiders to learn from and adapt to newcomers not steeped in the traditional ways of Stellenbosch. It takes time to see transformation not as a threat, but as an opportunity. But gradually this is beginning to happen. And, as perhaps may be expected, our students seem to find it easier than our staff,<sup>23</sup> who in turn find it easier than many of our alumni.

In essence, transformation is not just a numbers game, but a mind game. It involves changing the way people think: about the world and about their place in the world. Transformation at Stellenbosch is concerned with attaining Vision 2012. It involves a gradual merging of the older constituency into the newer constituency. During the past year we checked our own progress in this regard by commissioning a study on perceptions of the Stellenbosch University brand, particularly as regards transformation.<sup>2</sup> This study showed that there is a strong middle ground developing between the extremes of our two constituencies. The almost 6 000 respondents to the study can be divided into three clear groups:

- Group 1: Those who agree that transformation is taking place, and believe that the process is being responsibly managed.
- Group 2: Those who agree that transformation is taking place, but are of the opinion that it is irresponsibly managed, with scant regard for tradition.
- Group 3: Those who do not agree that transformation is happening, or who believe that it is happening much too slowly.

And the percentages are as follows: Group 1 comprises about 60% of respondents, Group 2 comprises 23%, and Group 3 comprises 17%. This, then, is how we are perceived five years after starting to walk down the transformation road mapped out by the Strategic Framework. It shows that we are succeeding in taking most people along with us.

Of course, we have a long way to go. But it is worth taking the time to get it right, because, if we do, there is much value that Stellenbosch can add. We are absolutely committed to being good academics, and convinced that this, in itself, is a contribution to intellectual capacity-building in our country. Our vision of being an active role-player in the development of a common South Africanness is not an idle speculation. Our interaction with other African countries over a wide spectrum of academic activities is already a reality. The promotion of a diversity of ideas has already gained its own momentum. And we are helping to build a new legitimacy for Afrikaans as a companion to other indigenous languages. If the energy and commitment that made Stellenbosch what it is can be turned outward; if we can reverse the trend towards inward immigration among our traditional constituency; if we can direct the work ethic, the determination, and the capacity for delivery that characterises Stellenbosch towards benefiting all South Africans, then we will truly serve as a national asset, and help South Africa transcend its past.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I Inaugural Address by the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Chris Brink, available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/Rector/inauguration.html>.
- <sup>2</sup> I considered the "Where do we come from?" question in my address to Convocation of November 2002 at a time when there was considerable fear and anger within our traditional support base about the future of Afrikaans as a language of Higher Education. Striking parallels exist between the situation in Higher Education in 2002, eight years after the creation of a democratic South Africa, and the situation in 1918, eight years after the formation of the Union of South Africa, when the University was founded. Tradition and Renewal, and the Future of Stellenbosch University. Speech of the Rector and Vice-Chancellor at the Meeting of the Convocation, 14 November 2002, available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/Rector/convocation14nov.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> According to the minutes of the founding meeting in 1864, "Het doel van het Gymnasium is een grondig onderwijs in de vakken, welke tot een beschaafde opvoeding gerekend worden" (The goal of the Gymnasium is a thorough instruction in those subjects considered to be part of a civilised education). *Gedenkboek van het Victoria-Kollege, De Nationale Pers, Kaapstad, 1918* (p.39).
- <sup>4</sup> It is no coincidence that the National Party, the insurance giant Sanlam ("Born out of the *volk* to serve the *volk*"), and the publishing empire now called Naspers (at first *De Nationale Pers*, with *De Burger* as its first publication) were founded in the same decade as Stellenbosch University – the latter actually also at Stellenbosch. Later examples of entrepreneurship broadly emanating from Stellenbosch include Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery (now Distell), the Rupert Group and Rand Merchant Bank.
- <sup>5</sup> See Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners* (Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town, 2003), Chapter 13: "The Making of a Radical Survival Plan". On another note: in Ida's Valley, one of the "Coloured" parts of town, Stellenbosch has been referred to as "the maternity ward of apartheid".
- <sup>6</sup> Examples are: Willie Esterhuyse's 1979 book, *Afskeid van Apartheid* (published in 1981 as *Apartheid Must Die*); the 1986 publication, *Die NG Kerk en Apartheid* (The Dutch Reformed Church and Apartheid), edited by Johann Kinghorn; and the conflict between the Stellenbosch Gespreksgroep 85 ("Discussion Group 85"), led by Sampie Terreblanche, and Prime Minister P.W. Botha in 1987.
- <sup>7</sup> Rector H.B. Thom made the characterisation of Stellenbosch as a *volksuniversiteit* explicit during the 1960s. See the memorial volume *Professor HB Thom*, published by the University in 1969.
- <sup>8</sup> See former Vice-Rector Hennie Rossouw's book *Universiteit, Wetenskap en Kultuur* ("University, Science and Culture"), Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1993.
- <sup>9</sup> See Stellenbosch University – 'n *Strategiese raamwerk vir die eeuwisseling en daarna* available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/universiteit/stratplan/statengels.html>.
- <sup>10</sup> See "Whose Place is this?" Short remarks at the Convocation Meeting, available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/rector/convocation.htm>.
- <sup>11</sup> Bram Fischer was an Afrikaner anti-apartheid activist, and member of the Communist Party. He was imprisoned, and eventually died in captivity. The University's decision to award him an Honorary Doctorate led to intense debate, in which many alumni unequivocally expressed their strong disapproval. The 2004 meeting of Convocation was almost exclusively devoted to this topic. Read the *commendatio* for Fischer at <http://www.sun.ac.za/rector/Afrikaans/commendatios.htm>.
- <sup>12</sup> In my Annual Public Report of 2004 I said: "The fact is that there are still those Afrikaners who would like to claim Stellenbosch University as a bastion of Afrikanerdom. We have no desire or intention to be

anything of the sort. A bastion is designed to keep people out. That is not what we want to do.... Our aim is to bring people in, not keep them out." See <http://www.sun.ac.za/rector/visie.htm>.

- <sup>13</sup> See "What is happening at Stellenbosch?" available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/university/Management/Rector/midyear.html>.
- <sup>14</sup> Such internal debates are almost invariably conducted in Afrikaans – which is why they remain internal. I have written about this in an article that appeared in the SAUVCA Newsletter Izwi, 4th Quarter 2004, pp. 6-8. See [http://www.sauvca.org.za/download\\_files/whats\\_new/izwi\\_december04.pdf](http://www.sauvca.org.za/download_files/whats_new/izwi_december04.pdf).
- <sup>15</sup> "Stellenbosch stands for an idea!" was the ringing declaration of D.F. Malan. Likewise, in the Preface to the 1916 *Gedenkboek van het Victoria-Kollege*, we read (my translation): "... the history of the Victoria College replicates, in miniature, the history of Dutch South Africa. Or rather, the history of our College is the educational counterpart of Dutch South Africa in the political arena. In both cases the struggle is about maintaining our own character: a volks-character; on the one hand, and a cultural character; on the other hand. And the struggle is far from over."
- <sup>16</sup> A study done of readers' letters in *Die Burger* from 2002 to March 2005 (provided in hard copy to the HEQC, also available here) shows that Stellenbosch University is a prominent theme. More than 600 letters concerning the University have been published since January 2002, making it of equal rank with the theme of crime and violence, and just below religion, as a topic of readers' letters. Transformation and language are the two most frequently discussed topics concerning the University. A case study, as well as interviews with editorial staff of *Die Burger*, confirmed that the tone of letters pertaining to the University was predominantly negative.
- <sup>17</sup> For example: the first round of NRF evaluations in the 1980s came as a big shock to the University.
- <sup>18</sup> Following the shock of the first NRF evaluations, the Science Faculty in particular made big strides in improving its research stature in the world outside Afrikanerdom – often by appointing non-alumni and/or English-speaking staff. More recent developments are touched upon in my Vice-Chancellor's report in the University's Annual Report for 2004.
- <sup>19</sup> First articulated in an address at the Centenary Celebrations of the Rhodes Scholarships "Quality needs diversity", available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/rector/rhodes2003e.html>. (Incidentally, the first ever Rhodes Scholarship in 1903 went to a Stellenbosch student called Tobie Müller – who declined it, in protest against its imperialistic overtones.) It must be mentioned that the idea of "quality needs diversity" has not met with approbation from within the University. This is why, debate on this matter notwithstanding, our documentation for the HEQC makes no stronger link between these two concepts than that "quality and diversity are complementary" (see par. , p.).
- <sup>20</sup> Examples and data substantiating this claim can be found in our Annual Reports of the past few years, as well as in the *Feiteboek* ("Fact Book") of the University.
- <sup>21</sup> During 2004 I conducted a study tour to universities in Canada, Finland, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland which have a policy of multilingualism. See my Report to Council, "Language-conscious Universities: Case Studies", available at <http://academic.sun.ac.za/abgv/Dokumente//USbeleid/Language%20case%20studies>.
- <sup>22</sup> This is shown most recently by the report, commissioned by Council, on the experience of first-year students following the implementation of the Language Plan in 2004, as well as the subsequent recommendations to Council by the Language Committee. The Report "Evaluation Language Policy, 28 February 2005" is available at <http://academic.sun.ac.za/abgv/Dokumente//USbeleid/Report%20Survey%20Implementation%20Language%20Policy%20Feb2005>. For the recommendations to Council

see [http://academic.sun.ac.za/abgv/Dokumente//USbeleid/Report\\_LanguageCommittee\\_to\\_Council\\_Feb05](http://academic.sun.ac.za/abgv/Dokumente//USbeleid/Report_LanguageCommittee_to_Council_Feb05).

- <sup>23</sup> Our students deserve credit for some innovative ideas and successful efforts towards changing the institutional culture. For example, whereas a few years ago initiation in our residences was a big problem, that debate now seems to be largely over; and the mindset that gave rise to unacceptable practices has shifted into a more positive mode. In 2005, for example, two of our residences channelled what in the past would have been in-house bonding activities into a successful house-building project in Kayamandi.
- <sup>24</sup> The study was carried out by CReST, the Centre for Research into Science and Technology. They have a long track record of such studies, e.g. for the HSRC and Government agencies. The full report "Ondersoek na die US handelsmerk, Maart 2005" is available at <http://academic.sun.ac.za/abgv/Dokumente//USbeleid/Handelsmerk%20Verslag%20Maart%202005>.

# INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE: WHAT DO WE AGREE ON?

November 2005

In December 2004 I was reappointed for a second term as Rector and Vice-Chancellor, which was due to start in January 2007, halfway towards 2012. My reappointment came at the end of a busy year, in which three topics dominated: our restructuring- and rightsizing exercise, our preparations for the institutional audit by the national Higher Education Quality Committee, and the public debate regarding the T-option. Of these three the first two received little public attention, but took up most of our internal energy. With the debate about the T-option exactly the opposite was the case. Although the matter did receive due attention internally, by far the greatest amount of energy devoted to this issue was external.

To summarise briefly what I said in my essay "What is an Afrikaans university?": the so-called T-option is one small part of the language policy approved by Council at the end of 2002, and amounts to a license for the use of English in a predominantly Afrikaans-language teaching module. The reaction against the T-option followed in the second half of 2005, after it was decided to extend the use of the T-option in the Faculty of Arts from the first two years of study to the third year of study as well. The annual meeting of Convocation took place in November 2005, at a time when emotions on this matter were at their highest. It was in my speech at this meeting that I offered, in view of the outcry in the Afrikaans press, to request at the forthcoming meeting of Council that the language specifications for teaching modules be referred back to Senate for reconsideration, amendment if Senate so decided, and a recommendation to Council in this regard. All of which duly happened afterwards. The Arts Faculty Board reconsidered the matter, and unanimously stood by their decision. Senate considered the matter, and recommended all language specifications unchanged. And finally Council considered the matter, and approved the recommendation. (And at the present time, in 2007, those specifications are still unchanged.)

I myself could never work up much emotional energy about the T-option, since it seems to me nothing more than a pragmatic approach to a natural classroom situation. What did concern me, however, was the increasing risk that a hard-line approach to the "protection" of Afrikaans, built on a wave of emotion regarding the T-option, would endanger our academic quality. I therefore used the occasion of the Convocation meeting to point out that if this were to happen the University could easily find itself on a slippery slope to academic isolation, and end up as a small parochial regional university.

# Language: What do we agree on?

## Short remarks at the Convocation meeting

10 November 2005

In essence, any debate, including our language debate, is concerned with points on which people differ. I believe that we owe it to ourselves to ask the opposite question as well:

What do we agree on?

If we could answer this question, and obtain consensus on what we agree on, it will also help us to obtain clarity on what we differ about. And if we have greater clarity on what we differ about, we will have a better chance to address those points of difference.

I would like to mention a few points I believe we agree on.

- Stellenbosch has a special commitment to Afrikaans, and we wish to retain that commitment.
- The core of the question regarding Afrikaans at Stellenbosch is the issue of *sustainability*. Broadly speaking, the question is how we can negotiate and maintain a safe and sustainable space for a small indigenous language in the presence of a powerful international language. In particular, the debate is on questions such as the so-called T option in the Faculty of Arts. The concern is not so much what could happen next year, but rather where this option could lead to in future. This has also given rise to the now well-known metaphor of the slippery slope, as being the opposite of the concept of sustainability.
- The third item has only recently, I believe, become a point of consensus. Namely, that Stellenbosch has never been, is not, does not want to be, and cannot be, strictly *unilingually* Afrikaans. It has become clear that an attitude of "Stellenbosch is Afrikaans and that's that!" has little, or at most negligible, support. This consensus, that Stellenbosch is not unilingually Afrikaans, means that we also all agree that there was, is and should be an English presence on our campus.
- The fourth point of agreement is that we are situated in the province that is home to most Afrikaans speakers, that the majority of these Afrikaans speakers are Coloured, and that, unfortunately, of all the population groups in the country, it is the Coloured Afrikaans speakers in particular who have the lowest rate of participation in Higher Education. Stellenbosch, as a role player, can make an important contribution in this regard.

I believe that there are more points on which we agree, but those mentioned will suffice for what I want to say further.

On a different note, I first want to say something about our budget. (Our main speaker tonight will expand further on this topic.) The total budget of Stellenbosch University, everything considered, is in the region of R1,6 billion. Approximately 31% of this comes from the state, about 21% from tuition and residence fees, approximately 5% from investments, and 43% – thus by far the greatest portion – from the so-called third-stream income. What is this *third-stream income*? In brief, it is the money

that academics themselves earn for the University through their research, their contracts with the commercial and industrial sectors, from donations received, intellectual property transactions, and entrepreneurship.

We can therefore view the University as a business with three important interest groups – call them shareholders if you like: the state, with a share of 31%, the community of students and their parents, which (if we allocate the investment money to this group) has a share of 26%, and the academics themselves, with a share of 43%. The interesting fact is that, in this business of ours, the employees form the largest group of shareholders. (Another interesting fact is the change over time: in 1997, the state's shareholding was 41% in comparison to the 31% today, the "community shareholding" was about the same, at 25%, and the share of third-stream income was 34% in comparison to the current 43%.)

It follows that one should grant the employees a high degree of decision-making power regarding the way they want to run their business. They are, after all, the people who teach the students, do the research, execute the contracts, and generate the intellectual property. And this idea of a high degree of decision-making power by the academics fits in well with the classical idea of academic freedom: that the academics should be free to take their own decisions. In the South African context, the best known formulation of this principle is probably that by TB Davy, who was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town in the 1950s. Academic freedom, he said, is the freedom to decide four questions:

Who shall teach?

Who shall be taught?

What shall be taught?

How shall it be taught?

This is what happened in deciding on the T option in the Faculty of Arts – the decision that gave rise to the current language debate. It has to do with whom we want to admit as students, what tuition we want to offer them, who should offer that tuition, and how we can best offer that tuition. And it also concerns the academic freedom of the academics to take such decisions.

But we know that the world is not simple, that decisions cannot be taken in a vacuum, and that the other shareholders in the University's business should also be consulted in relation to our reflection and decision making. On the basis of the points of agreement I mentioned, and in the interest of joint reflection, I would now like to share some points of view with you.

Through the motion that was tabled tonight, Convocation has expressed its concern about the risks facing Afrikaans, such as the risk posed by multilingualism, the risk of Afrikaans becoming non-sustainable, and the risk of perceptions regarding Stellenbosch. I agree that it is fitting to consider the issue, amongst others, as a risk analysis.

Multilingualism is viewed as a risk to Afrikaans. And clearly it is a risk. If you are multilingual, and the one language is small and the other language is big, the smaller language is at risk. The lion and the lamb may lie down together, but the lamb will not get much sleep. On the other hand: once you have said that you are not unilingual, then you have also said that you are multilingual. And if this is the



path that you have chosen to follow, you have at the same time said that you have chosen one risk over another. Because, and this is something we should be well aware of, too strict an Afrikaans unilingualism would pose its own risk, and, in my view, this would be an even greater risk than that posed by multilingualism.

If we regard the risk of multilingualism as that of a slippery slope to anglicisation, then we must, on the other hand, regard the risk of Afrikaans unilingualism as that of a slippery slope to isolation. In the complex world in which the University finds itself, within the force fields of globalisation, the University as a whole will easily be able to slide back to the position of a small, parochial, regional university. Surely this is not what we want for our children. And it is no use denying this risk by saying that it did not happen in the past, because the Stellenbosch of the past was a different world from the Stellenbosch of the present or the future.

We are thus poised between the risks of *two* possible slippery slopes: anglicisation and isolation. Where the former might place Afrikaans at risk, the latter, to my mind, is even more fundamental, because it places the entire University at risk. The way of sustainability, I believe, is to be vigilant that, in our efforts to steer clear of the one slippery slope, we don't end up on the other one. I would like to say that there are encouraging signs that we have thus far succeeded fairly well in this balancing act.

For example, if we look at those whom we serve with Afrikaans tuition, namely the Afrikaans-speaking students, I can tell you that the percentage of Afrikaans-speaking undergraduate students is approximately the same now, in 2005, as it was in 2002. (The precise figures are as follows: In 2002, 70,8% of our undergraduate students were Afrikaans speaking, in 2003 it was 70,6%, in 2004 it was 70,9%, and this year it is 69,8%. The same is true of the Faculty of Arts: the percentage of Afrikaans-speaking undergraduate students in that Faculty was 63,9% in 2002, and it is 63,5% this year.) Looking further at our teaching offering in terms of modules, I can tell you that more than half of our modules are offered only in Afrikaans, and only approximately 16% is offered only in English (and this includes the Faculty of Military Science, where everything is done only in English).

The indications are that our current Afrikaans teaching offering may even be more than it was before the ratification of the language policy in 2002, but this is difficult to verify because we do not have precise figures from the time before we began to allocate language specifications to modules. Regarding the now-notorious decision concerning the T option in the third year of the Faculty of Arts, I can tell you that it affects about 130 modules, 70 of which are offered by a single department, namely Music, where teaching typically takes place one on one or in small groups.

I have spoken about our concern regarding the other slippery slope, towards isolation and exclusivity, on other occasions. Many factors play a role in our balancing act between these two potential slippery slopes, one of which I want to highlight, because it links to the fourth point on which we agree. This is the role of Coloured and/or black Afrikaans speakers, specifically in the Western Cape. On a number of occasions in the current debate, the point has been made that tuition in Afrikaans is an instrument of empowerment for this group, since they are the ones with the lowest rate of participation and success in Higher Education. The point has also been made that there are many Coloured people who would prefer to be taught in Afrikaans. I have no wish to make any pronouncements in this regard, mainly

because I am uncomfortable with the fact that so many white people apparently think nothing of saying what they think Coloured people think. I would, however, like to express a hypothesis.

My hypothesis is that, if we want to draw more Coloured people to Stellenbosch, we will have to mobilise more resources before we hoist the flag of Afrikaans. And by mobilising more resources I do not only mean that we should offer more bursaries, although this is obviously very important. I mean that we should offer a total support package. For example, it remains an anomaly to me that we so readily offer wealthy students from privileged homes and schools, *whose parents live in Stellenbosch*, accommodation in our residences, while at the same time we easily refuse a disadvantaged Coloured student from Eerste River a place in a residence because her matriculation marks are not good enough. What message does this send about the empowerment we talk about so glibly? Do we really expect the Coloured student, from a less privileged environment, who is struggling with her first-year workload, to spend two hours commuting to Stellenbosch every day just for the privilege of attending classes in Afrikaans? I think it does not work like that.

You may be interested to know that there are considerably more Coloured Afrikaans-speaking students at the University of the Western Cape than at Stellenbosch (23% more, to be precise). As a matter of fact, there are also more Coloured students at the University of Cape Town than at Stellenbosch. Stellenbosch, which provides tuition in Afrikaans, therefore has fewer Coloured students than its two sister universities, which offer tuition in English, which are more convenient in terms of transport for many people, and which probably do not offer fewer bursaries than we do.

I would now briefly like to say something about what I believe each of our interest groups could contribute on the road ahead to help define and maintain that safe and sustainable space for Afrikaans that we are all striving for.

Regarding the state: The so-called "historically Afrikaans universities" (a nomenclature, by the way, that I believe should itself now become history) were, until recently, the only universities in the country that took multilingualism seriously, each in their own way. They did this at considerable cost, and with a considerable investment of time and energy. Now that voices are increasingly being raised to promote multilingualism, specifically in the sense of the indigenous languages in relation to English – and here we need to include Afrikaans as an indigenous language – it seems only fair to support those who implement multilingualism with the resources required for doing so. One way would be to include the promotion of multilingualism as a parameter in the funding formula for Higher Education. The other four rectors and I have already obtained approval in principle from the Minister of Education for this possibility to be investigated, and we have already nominated people to work with the Department in this regard.

Regarding "the community": as you know, even at the time of the ratification of the language policy in 2002 we committed ourselves to reconsider the issue every three years. This will again be an open process, during which we would like to hear the voices of all interested parties. I would therefore like to invite all alumni, students and their parents to participate in this exercise.

Regarding our most significant interest group, namely the academics themselves: as always there is a lot of work to be done. For example, we still talk all too readily about the state of tuition in Afrikaans

without having given much attention to how we wish to measure it. Do we simply wish to count the number of modules in the A option, knowing that modules may differ in size from one another by an order of magnitude, or do we wish to develop a better method? Likewise for the question of affordability. Before we take decisions about which module should be presented according to which language specification, perhaps we should first ask ourselves how many students should be present in the class per module before it becomes financially viable. And then, regarding our language specifications, there is no harm in reconsidering the matter. At the next University Council meeting, therefore, I will request that all existing language specifications be referred back to the Senate for discussion, for amendment if Senate should so decide, and for recommendation to Council.

Finally, I would like to compliment our students on the insight and empathy they have displayed thus far regarding the diversity of ideas featuring within the language debate. By that I mean all our students, no matter which march or petition on language they may have participated in, and in particular our Students' Representative Council. The responsible manner in which the new generation thinks and acts gives me confidence for the future.

# Reaction

## “Not for sissies”

Forum article: *Die Burger*, 9 November 2005

### CORNIA PRETORIUS

On the eve of a large public meeting on Afrikaans at the University of Stellenbosch and some days before the Council comes to a final decision on Prof. Chris Brink's continued rectorship, he talks to *Cornia Pretorius*.

On a day on which the summer heat literally drains the energy from your body Prof. Brink is in the city of Jacarandas, Blue Bulls and civil servants. Despite the 30+°C, the Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch is in jacket and tie.

In the past week Brink has had to endure hotter temperatures of a political kind. If he has been burned by the heat, it does not show. At Stellenbosch a number of fires are raging at a time when the extension of his contract is being discussed – the fiercest of them being the place of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University.

The Institutional Forum, the structure representing all interest groups on the campus, had a few days before Brink's visit to Pretoria voted for the “long process”, which means that the rector's post has to be advertised again.

Later on this hot day in the north, the Senate, which is the academic backbone of the University and consists mostly of professors, indicated that Brink must stay on. (The result of their vote was in favour of the “short process” – that there should be only one candidate and in fact it should be the incumbent.)

It is worth knowing how this process works.

Three bodies – the Forum, the Senate and the Council – must each vote twice on two separate occasions. These votes are important signals to the Council.

The first round of voting is on the short or the long process. The short process means that there is just one candidate, while the long process means that the post has to be advertised again.

On Monday the Council decides on the long or the short process.

If the Council votes in favour of the short process, the matter is referred back to the Forum and the Senate, who have to answer the following question: “Do you want to reappoint the current rector or not?”

They will vote and the result will again be taken as an indicator by the Council.

Regardless of the outcome of these processes, Brink feels that his work as rector and the management of the process of change at the US have been the most interesting experiences he has ever had.

"At the moment South Africa is the most interesting place on earth to live and work. Here you can see the pattern of global change playing itself out before your very eyes. This applies particularly to Stellenbosch, where you can feel the tension between the past, the present and the future so clearly. To have in addition the opportunity to be involved in the process of change as a participant and role player is something that I would not have missed for the world."

A part of the change to which he refers is the redefinition of the place of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in a multilingual South Africa.

This affects all the multilingual universities – Stellenbosch University, the University of Pretoria, North-West University, the University of the Free State and the University of Johannesburg. But nowhere else has the language debate been conducted so publicly and with so much emotion.

Brink thinks that part of the passion stems from the apparently unshakeable belief that the Stellenbosch University's internal affairs are "everybody's" business, and that the first and best place to address anything affecting the University is in the letters column of *Die Burger*.

"This is my seventh university (from the old RAU to Cambridge, Rhodes to Cape Town, Britain to Australia), and nowhere have I experienced such a high level of public exposure."

The argument this time is about the extension of the so-called T-option, in other words, dual-medium teaching, or the use of English and Afrikaans in one class, at the Arts Faculty.

Stellenbosch University adopted its language policy in 2002. This means, among other things, that from 2003 every module had to specify its language option, e.g. T (dual medium) or A (Afrikaans).

Hence almost all first-year modules in the Arts Faculty were listed as T-option modules in the Arts Faculty and the 2004 first-years were the first group to be taught in accordance with this specification. In the second year and, as a continuation of the policy, in the third year virtually all modules were once again specified as T-option modules this year.

The trouble started when next year's modules were also about to be specified as T-option modules. This would mean that the first-year group that "grew up" with the T-option would complete their degrees under the same option.

Three years of dual-medium instruction suddenly became too much.

Where were the Giliomees, Kapps and letter writers to *Die Burger* in 2003? And in 2004?

Why the fuss about the Arts Faculty, while the T-option is also general practice at the Medical Faculty and the Faculty of Theology? The view of the Council, after it had an opportunity to discuss the matter last week, is that the language policy of 2002, which has been in place since then, will remain in force until, as originally planned, it will be revised in 2006. This is in accordance with the original plan and will indicate how the T-option has affected Afrikaans at Stellenbosch University.

Brink, who was involved in these discussions, is going to propose to the Council on Monday that the language specifications – the labelling of modules as, for example, "T" – be referred back to the Senate and Faculties – the places where the proposals came from each year from 2002.

Is Brink going to become a victim of the language debate?

"I would not see myself as a 'victim', no matter what happens, but I do think it would be a great pity if Stellenbosch now wants to draw back from the path set out in 2000 already in the Strategic Framework – two years before my arrival. This is not about me, but about the implementation of a considered decision taken by the university community about where we want to be. I'm afraid that the most likely 'victim' of the language debate can be that decision."

Brink says that the Strategic Framework states that the reason for the University's existence is knowledge, not language.

"Once you understand this, you will also better understand our stance regarding the language debate. Naturally we have a commitment to Afrikaans – a certain stability concerning the use of Afrikaans is one of the goals we wish to achieve. This means that our approach to language does not centralise the so-called T option as some unshakable principle. We implement a mixed portfolio of approaches. We do not mind using unilingualism, bilingualism, the T-option, parallel-medium tuition, simultaneous translation or any other approach where it is most appropriate – as long as it helps us to maintain the sustainability of Afrikaans. Different environments and different student groups have different needs, and we use what is best for the academic circumstances, the students and the staff."

An even greater issue over the next few days will be the rector's post. Brink still wishes to do a number of things in order to take further the work that he has already done to make Stellenbosch University stand out in terms of academic excellence.

"We have only just started to become a role player in South African society, and to exploit Stellenbosch's potential as a university town internationally. We have decided in what direction we want to go as far as transformation and diversity are concerned, but we have not yet taken many steps along that route. This is why I sometimes wish we could just quarantine the language debate for a while, so that it does not take away so much institutional energy from the many other things that are important to us."

If the Council decides that Brink must apply again for his own post, will he do so?

Brink does not wish to answer this question in the press.

This opens the door to playing devil's advocate.

If he must apply for his post again, is it because his position as rector is linked to the alleged erosion of Afrikaans or because Stellenbosch University has supposedly declined as an academic institution over the past four years (which has in fact not happened, according to internal as well as external evaluations)?

Be that as it may, the University could perhaps decide to place his name in the hat along with the names of others. Whose name is then going to jump out at one? Or be more progressive? Where does the University want to be as a university in the future?

How does all the speculation about your contract affect your work, Prof. Brink? How do you remain motivated if you know there are people who perhaps want to get rid of you?

"You take a deep breath, go home and have a glass of wine, and go through the exercise of making sure that you believe in what you do. What is important is that taking the right decisions for the long term, not popular decisions for the short term.

"Transformation is not for sissies. If you want to change things, in order to make them better, or if you must change things to ensure that they do not get worse, then you are going to affect some people's comfort zones, and naturally they are going to get cross with you. It is not surprising that they will then blame the decision maker rather than the circumstances that led to those decisions.

"Then you must simply listen and adapt as necessary. This does take up a lot of time but, as they say, it comes with the territory. It's interesting work in interesting times. I'm not complaining."

*Note: This interview was conducted before the meeting of Convocation and just before Prof. Brink was appointed for a second term as Vice-Chancellor and Rector.*

## Key Points

### *No Lesser Place – The taaldebat at Stellenbosch, 2006*

Chris Brink's book *No lesser place – The taaldebat at Stellenbosch* – was intended to place the debate on the language issue, which was conducted mainly in Afrikaans, within a broader South African context. (The Afrikaans translation of the book, entitled *Geen mindere plaatz: Die Stellenbosse taaldebat*, has not yet been published.) The text below appeared on the back cover of the English edition.

Insofar as the *taaldebat* is a debate and not just a campaign, it may be considered as representing the interplay between two directions of thought regarding the future of Afrikaans. There are those whose point of departure is that Afrikaans should be *protected*, and that the best way of doing so is by *making rules*. And there are those who believe that Afrikaans should be promoted, and that the best way of doing so is by *making friends*. That is, some take a protectionist stance, and some a multiculturalist stance – a distinction that may also be observed at universities elsewhere in the world.

I believe we should turn the debate around. Instead of debating about what Stellenbosch is *not* doing for Afrikaans, we should focus much more on what Stellenbosch *is* doing, and *can* do.

- I believe that Stellenbosch can and should play an important part in the promotion of Afrikaans, and in building an inclusive future for the language, based on a value-driven approach.
- I believe that it is perfectly possible for Stellenbosch to promote Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context, without being a rule-driven "Afrikaans university" using mechanisms of exclusion and compulsion as envisaged by the *taalstryders*.
- I believe that the kind of "Afrikaans university" envisaged by the *taalstryders* would be inimical to the future of Stellenbosch University, and to the future of Afrikaans itself.
- I believe it is *not only* Stellenbosch that should play a role in promoting Afrikaans.
- I believe Stellenbosch University should offer teaching *not only* in Afrikaans.
- I believe that it is not the primary task of the University to "save" Afrikaans.

The protectionist stance arises from fear. The multiculturalist stance arises from hope. I believe that, for Afrikaans and for South Africa, we should spend our energy working towards the things for which we hope, rather than working against the things we fear.



# New names for new Afrikaner groups

## Some seek a "volkstaat of the mind"

*Rapport Perspective*, 26 March 2006

### ZB DU TOIT

Prof. Chris Brink, Rector of the University of Stellenbosch, states in a book just published that the language dispute at the University expresses an important facet of those he calls neo-Afrikaners. *Z.B. Du Toit* looks at this idea more closely.

Did you think that the language disagreements on the Stellenbosch University campus were only about the University's problems with bilingualism or Afrikaans as sole medium of instruction? Or more broadly, the future language identity of the University and the possible consequences of this for the wellbeing of Afrikaans?

Not according to the analysis of the situation by Prof. Chris Brink, the rector, in his new book just published by the University. He sees the - threatening? - spectre of a re-emergent "Afrikaner Nationalism" taking shape, of "neo-Afrikaners" who are "regrouping".

And some forty years after Afrikaners were saddled with the labels "conservative" (*verkramp*) and "enlightened" (*verlig*), he pulls two new rabbits out of the hat by referring to the "protectionist" and the "multicultural" approach to Afrikaans.

Brink sees Stellenbosch as a battlefield, as it were, chosen to reconfirm Afrikaner group identity, or rather to establish a new group identity extending across racial, religious and class differences at an "Afrikaans university" (Stellenbosch). The neo-Afrikaners are regrouping, not primarily around the issue of language, but of identity.

The way in which Brink places the events on his campus within broader national and even international political and cultural contexts undoubtedly provide the most surprising and the most insightful observations in his *No Lesser Place – The taaldebat at Stellenbosch*.

He distinguishes a broad array of organisations, institutions and contentious issues enlisted in positioning the Afrikaner as an endangered minority within a liberal democracy. These include the *FAK*, *SA Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, the *Afrikanerbond*, *Solidariteit* and the resistance to affirmative action to get at the government. Naspers newspapers and the *Stigting vir Bemagtiging deur Afrikaans*, largely supported by Naspers, are also part of this pattern. But Afrikaans remains the key, the intellectual link, in what Brink calls this "enterprise".

Because an Afrikaner homeland (*volkstaat*) is no longer a possibility, Brink argues, neo-Afrikaners have "immigrated inwardly" to a "volkstaat of the mind".

"Nevertheless, even for a community of the spirit it would be good to have a place where those who are like-minded could congregate. And what better place could there be than Stellenbosch? After all, to quote DF Malan again, Stellenbosch stands for an idea," he writes.

Needless to say, Brink – and certainly those who think like him – does not care at all for such views and attitudes. He therefore stresses that those who are concerned about the role and future of Afrikaans do not necessarily support the agenda of the neo-Afrikaners – and some may even oppose it. Elsewhere he writes:

"Those who wish to retain their identity as Afrikaners and participate in the 'abundance of opportunities' in the new South Africa as *Afrikaners* are free to do so. But it must be made clear that there are also those who say: 'Not in my name!'"

"For some who are apparently Afrikaners their Afrikaner-ness has simply become a matter of indifference. It is neither a blessing nor a curse; it is a part of who you are as much as (and no more than) having red hair or a birthmark."

Brink's dismissal of the notion of an "Afrikaans university" and naturally of Stellenbosch as such an institution flows logically from this. For him, Stellenbosch is developing as a "national asset" – more than just a *volksuniversiteit* serving only one section of the population.

Brink stresses that a university does not revolve around ethnicity, language or culture, but around knowledge. A "multicultural" approach rather than one that is "protectionist", a "soft" commitment to Afrikaans, rather than a "hard, non-negotiable demand for a sharply defined identity as Afrikaans university", are thus the proper routes to follow.

It is no wonder that Brink's alleged inability to see the threat that English holds and his unwillingness to see the necessity for protecting Afrikaans frustrates his critics so. As Prof. Danie Goosen, chair of the FAK, puts it in his reaction to the US rector's book:

"He makes no attempt to understand the gradual social and political marginalisation of Afrikaans at university level over the past decade, or provide any concrete, institutional response to this whatsoever. There are only vague promises and good intentions as far as Afrikaans is concerned. How these are to be embodied institutionally remains a mystery for any reader of his book."

One is very clearly dealing here with sharp and irreconcilable differences of opinion. Brink himself says that the language debate is not only a weighing up of options, but a "conflict of convictions".

Has Stellenbosch perhaps brought to the surface a deep rift among Afrikaners ten years after relatively passive silence? Is Brink's observation about the rise of the neo-Afrikaner right? Can we now expect something like the battle between *verlig* and *verkramp* waged in the 1970s and 1980s?

It is undoubtedly too early to tell. The two camps, the "multiculturalists" and the "protectionists" as Brink has labelled them, are far too unorganised, while there is not much evidence of mutual agreement. There are also few signs of a truly consistent debate on what being Afrikaans means, and even when it does take place, it is lame, issue-bound and consequently sporadic.

And what about the broad mass of Afrikaans speakers? To date they have given few indications that they consciously regard themselves as a minority, as some minorities elsewhere have done. At present there can be little talk of a readiness to be called upon to serve the cause, even though emotions might run high in cases such as the Stellenbosch language debate.

What is absolutely certain, however, is that Stellenbosch has exposed a raw nerve of sharply divergent views on what being Afrikaans entails in the new South Africa.

# INTRODUCTION TO LETTER TO SENATE ON LANGUAGE RISKS

May 2006

Built into the language policy which was approved at the end of 2002, and came into effect with the new intake of first-year students in 2004, was the idea of a review after three years. A task team was commissioned for this purpose in January 2006, and as part of their work they issued an open invitation for inputs and submissions. The submission received from the Executive of Convocation required attention outside the Task Team as well, for two reasons: the document was in the public domain, through having been published on the alumni website, and it made a case for the identity model of an Afrikaans university at Stellenbosch, contrary to the academic model that was already in place.

The core of the identity model is that competence in Afrikaans should be compulsory for all students and all staff of Stellenbosch university, and this was indeed also the core proposal of the submission by the Executive of Convocation. Since this proposal went against the grain of previous decisions by Senate, my judgment was that it was necessary for Senate to give direction in this regard to the Task Team and to Council. In the letter that follows I spelled out the risks of making competence in Afrikaans compulsory, and asked Senate to voice an opinion on the proposal.

Senate had a thorough debate on the matter at its meeting of 2 June 2006, and then brought it to a vote. The proposal regarding compulsory competence in Afrikaans for all students received 5 votes in favour, with 115 votes against. The analogous proposal regarding compulsory competence in Afrikaans for all staff fared even worse, with only 3 votes in favour and 115 against. In both cases there were a number of abstentions: 40 for the first proposal, and 42 for the second.

The outcome was in my view a good reflection of reality. The idea of compulsory competence in Afrikaans has practically no support amongst academics, but there are academics who would rather remain silent than voice their opposition. In this instance, however, the great majority of Senate members were united in their view that it was time to stand up for their principles, and did so.

# Letter to Senate on language risks



**UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY**  
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29 May 2006

Members of Senate  
Stellenbosch University

Dear Member of Senate

At the last meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee of Council (16 May 2006) I submitted, as part of the normal risk management report for which I am responsible, a risk analysis of the Afrikaans language debate. The Committee found this risk analysis informative and important enough to request that it should also be submitted to Senate for discussion and opinion. Members of Senate will recall that at our last meeting (21 April 2006) the Task Team for the review of the language policy also requested Senate to indicate approval of the direction they are taking. In addition, Council has decided to hold a one-day informal discussion of the language policy before its next meeting (26 June 2006), and a clear indication of intent from Senate at such a discussion would be desirable.

Accordingly, I am writing to request Senate to express its position on a particular and important aspect of the language debate, and to help map out the way forward.

The background is as follows. Over the past few years Stellenbosch University (SU) has shown considerable progress towards its goal of being an internationally recognised research-led broad-based university. As an academic institution SU is now more successful than ever before, and our legitimacy in the wider community has seldom, if ever, been better.

- At the recent conference of university Vice-Chancellors of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) one university is singled out in the overview of the Annual Report from amongst the almost 500 members as an example to others, and that is Stellenbosch.
- Stellenbosch University currently has the highest output of research publications relative to size in South Africa.
- On eight of the standard indicators for academic excellence of universities, Stellenbosch appears under the top three in the country – and on four of those we are first. (As reported in the public annual report in July 2005.)
- Three of the seven national Centres of Excellence are currently located at Stellenbosch – the highest proportion of any university in the country.

- Last year we were designated as the Technologically Most Innovative University in South Africa.
- Last year we produced a record number of doctorates – proportionately the best performance in the country.

The University is also in good shape in many other respects. Our internal and external auditors are satisfied that the university is well-managed – an opinion also expressed by the HEQC evaluation panel at the feedback session following their audit visit last year. We are one of only two South African universities who have already implemented the International Financial Reporting Standards – which in turn simplifies our international research contracts. We are upgrading and extending our sports facilities on a large scale. Our campus remains a showpiece to be proud of. Together we have the capacity to deal with unforeseen circumstances – as our handling of the recent Escom power cuts illustrates.

It is against this background that we should take note of a number of specific risk factors arising from the language debate regarding the legitimacy as well as the nature and performance of the University as an academic institution. I repeat here the analysis which served before the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

1. The legitimacy of Senate may be eroded, in an area central to our academic endeavour, by pressure in the Afrikaans press. In *Rapport* of 23 April, for example, it is stated categorically on the middle page – a *propos* of Senate decisions of 2005 regarding the implementation of the language policy – that “Stellenbosch University has never experienced a worse public image or a greater crisis of credibility”. Against the background of the achievements mentioned above it is clear that any such claim can only be rooted in an environment fixated on Afrikaans as the sole or most important aspect of the University. None the less, such claims, untrue and unworthy as we may consider them, are causing harm to the University.
2. The language debate may consume too much institutional energy – energy that could be much better employed in pursuit of our core functions. Important as Afrikaans is to us, and fully understanding our responsibility to be roleplayers in this matter, we must keep in mind that Afrikaans is only one of five items in our Vision 2012, and that it should not consume more of our time and effort than the pursuit of the other four items.
3. Within a few weeks it will be the 30th anniversary of the student uprising in Soweto in 1976. That event, which has become a national and international reference point of the struggle against apartheid, was triggered by Afrikaans being enforced as a medium of instruction. Any such move on our campus which can be interpreted as such is likely to unleash a strongly adverse reaction nationally and internationally against Stellenbosch University.

The overarching risk identified by the Audit and Risk Management Committee at macro-level is clearly exemplified by the following proposals submitted to the Task Team by the Executive of Convocation<sup>1</sup>:

- 3.5. That all students in all faculties must either pass a language skills test in Afrikaans and English or attend compulsory language skills courses in Afrikaans and English, as a credit-bearing part of their degree courses. ...

- 3.6. That academics without sufficient knowledge of Afrikaans or English be compelled to attend courses that will bring them to a level where they will be capable of treating both languages equally when lecturing.

These proposals do not allow any misinterpretation. It is not just a matter of students doing academic language skills tests – they do so already. It is also not a matter of the University helping students to acquire academic language skills in either Afrikaans or English – we do so already. The proposals are that all students and all academic staff should be compelled to become proficient both in English and in Afrikaans. Since Afrikaans speaking students and staff are by and large proficient in English already, the proposals simply mean that all students and all academic staff who are not already proficient in Afrikaans at registration or appointment, should be compelled to become proficient in Afrikaans. No exceptions or qualifications are included in these proposals – for example, no case is made that the proposals may only apply to undergraduate students, or to particular Faculties or disciplines. The proposals are not saying that proficiency in Afrikaans should be a matter of choice – they are saying that it should be a matter of compulsion.

If these two proposals by Convocation were to be adopted and implemented, the academic business of the university, as well as our shape and size, would be put at risk in a number of ways.

- *We would immediately lose the Faculty of Military Science.* We are contracted by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to provide academic training. But the SANDF is not a multilingual organisation. They conduct their business in English only, and part of our agreement with them is that we will provide their academic training in English. There is no possibility of the SANDF agreeing to compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans for students in the Faculty of Military Science.
- *A number of other Faculties would be put at risk.* It is unlikely that the Faculties of Health Sciences or Theology (to name only two) could conduct their academic business successfully if proficiency in Afrikaans becomes a compulsory requirement for all students and all academic staff. Our strategic goals regarding community interaction and being a role-player in the broad South African society, in particular, would be severely at risk.
- *Our postgraduate student numbers would decrease dramatically.* Between 2001 and 2005 the number of black postgraduate students grew by nearly 50%, to the current total of more than 3,000, while the number of white postgraduate students remained stable at around 4,000. A growing number of postgraduates, and black postgraduate students in particular, wish to conduct their studies and research in English. With a policy of compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans we would be facing a scenario of thousands of postgraduate students disappearing from our campus.
- *Our undergraduate programme offering would decrease significantly.* In the first place we would lose all undergraduate programmes of which we are the only provider in South Africa. (The best known – but not the only – example is Forestry.) Part of our language policy is that any programme which we offer, but nobody else does, will be available in English. Where this is the case there are no academic reasons for students and staff in those programmes to be proficient in Afrikaans. All programmes of all universities in South Africa must be accredited by the Department of Education, and it is quite clear that we would lose our accreditation for such programmes if we were to insist

on compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans. Secondly, we would lose all programmes which, because of low student numbers, are not financially viable if we only take students proficient in Afrikaans. (Soil Science would be an example.) Thirdly, we would lose those programmes in highly specialised areas where potential academic staff are very scarce, and where we are not in a negotiating position enabling us to make unusual conditions of employment. (Teaching Mandarin, for example.)

- *We would lose some of our international accreditations.* Our Business School, for example, is currently the only one in the country with three international accreditations. An institutional policy of compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans for all students and all academic staff would put those accreditations at risk, and significantly decrease the size of the Business School.
- *A number of our international cooperation agreements would be at risk.* At present our international image is taking shape very nicely (as is shown, for example, by the ACU Annual Report), and we have concluded a number of significant international cooperation agreements over the past few years. Much of this progress abroad is based on a nuanced and balanced understanding of our 5-point Vision Statement. Thus, for example, a renowned university like St Andrews in Scotland has indicated very clearly that compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans would be considered to be against the spirit of the cooperation agreement we signed last year.
- *We would lose a number of top academics, and further recruitment of top academics would be compromised.* As part of our Business Plan we already employ a number of top academics who are not proficient in Afrikaans. Their presence on our staff is very valuable in terms of research outputs, role-playing initiatives, and academic interactions in Africa. Their academic calibre is such that they would be in demand at any other university in South African, or internationally. It is highly unlikely that we would be able to retain them on our staff, or that we would be able to recruit more academics of their calibre, if we were to try and force them to become proficient in Afrikaans.

These are only some consequences which would follow necessarily from a policy of making proficiency in Afrikaans compulsory for all students and academic staff. Much more could be said about likely consequences, or side-effects. For example: that we would not be able to deliver on our vision of increased diversity, that we would suffer a loss of legitimacy which would severely impede our initiatives in Africa, that we would suffer a decrease in numbers (with the consequent financial implications), that we could only fish in a small pond for students and staff, that fundraising would suffer (particularly contributions from abroad), and many more.

With a policy of compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans, as proposed by the Convocation Executive, the probability is that we would shrink to an institution offering not much more than undergraduate teaching in a limited number of standard disciplines, and a few ad hoc postgraduate and research initiatives.

Such a scenario goes directly against the vision we have for Stellenbosch University. The Strategic Framework of 2000, our Vision 2012, the Business Plan of the University, and the shape-and-size measures adopted by Council in June 2005 all confirm our ideal of being an internationally recognised research-led broad-based university. The overarching risk of an all-too-strict policy of compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans for all students and academic staff would amount to trading in Vision 2012 for for the



image of an institution considerably more limited in its academic activities, in shape, size and nature. As Chief Risk Officer of the University I am duty-bound to point out this risk.

Clearly the above-mentioned two proposals of the Convocation Executive lie at the core of the debate regarding the language policy of the university. And, being so clearly formulated, these proposals allow a simple yes-or-no response. We can therefore begin to address the overarching risk of an all-too-strict language policy by sending a clear message from Senate on how we view these paradigmatic proposals.

It is appropriate that such a direction-giving message should go to Council from Senate, since Senate is the academic decision-making body of the University. All policy decisions are finalised in Council, but in the case of language policy the Higher Education Act gives a special status to Senate. Namely, the Council of each university must decide on a language policy *with the concurrence of Senate*. Therefore, the voice of Senate must be heard, and Council cannot finalise the language policy without Senate agreeing to it.

Accordingly, I intend to poll the opinion of Senate at our meeting of 2 June 2006 by putting up for consideration the above-mentioned two proposals (as quoted here), and asking members of Senate to vote yes or no on the question whether you support these proposals or not.

Item 5 of Vision 2012 says that we wish to promote Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context. The verb here is *promote*. By voting down the above-mentioned two proposals of the Convocation Executive, Senate will be sending to Council and the public at large a clear and direction-giving message. The message is that we do not intend to try and promote Afrikaans by forcing it upon people. Methods of exclusion and compulsion are not good for the University, and not good for Afrikaans.

By voting down the above-mentioned two proposals of the Convocation Executive we are not walking away from Afrikaans. We are simply acknowledging the boundaries of the reality within which our promotion of Afrikaans should take place. That reality is the "multilingual context" of item 5 of Vision 2012. There is no deliberate agenda of *verengelsing* at Stellenbosch. There is also no desire to sit back and let *verengelsing* unfold as a natural process. It is not part of Vision 2012 that Stellenbosch should become an "English university". But to deny the reality of our multilingual context will have the simultaneous effect of putting the academic endeavour of the University at risk and isolating Afrikaans. It is simply a reality that, in pursuit of our academic goals and Vision 2012, we will have students and staff on campus who are not proficient in Afrikaans. It will be to our own disadvantage to deny or try to undo this reality.

I therefore ask members of Senate please to reflect thoroughly on this matter, and then on 2 June to vote for or against the Convocation proposals.

Of course there are two sides to any coin. It is only fair, then, that we may be asked what it is that we do wish to do regarding language.

- *We wish to continue taking our own decisions, after considering relevant inputs.* Last year Senate expressed its view on the extension of the T-option to the third year in the Faculty of Arts in no uncertain terms. When the initial decision was taken up as a contentious issue in the public media, we went back to the Faculty, which unanimously confirmed its earlier recommendation. We debated the matter in the Executive Committee of Senate, which supported the Faculty's recommenda-

tion. After that Senate also had an extensive debate on the matter at our meeting of 30 November, followed by a vote conducted with ballot papers, where the recommendation was approved with an overwhelming majority. What this means is that we wish to conduct the decision-making process in close concert with the academics, since they are the ones who actually stand in front of a class, and who bear the responsibility of ensuring that students are educated and trained for their future careers to the best of our ability.

- *We wish to continue with our differentiated approach.* Because we are a broad-based university, the academic environments within the University may differ considerably from each other. Therefore, in pursuing our Vision 2012, we try to find the best approach appropriate to each environment. This is also true for the promotion of Afrikaans, and in particular for Afrikaans as a medium of undergraduate instruction. In the Faculty of Engineering, for example, all first-year students follow the same academic programme. This circumstance enables us to investigate easily and at practically no expense the possibilities of parallel medium instruction coupled with language skills development. But such an approach cannot simply be transposed to (for example) the Faculty of Science, since first-year students in that Faculty follow a wide variety of programmes. In the Faculty of Agrisciences the situation is again different, since most of their students only register in that Faculty from their second year onwards. And in the Department of Music, where much of the teaching is one-on-one, we really should consider whether the idea of language specification of modules makes any sense at all.
- *We wish to give our Task Team enough scope to come forward with proposals on how we can pursue item 5 of Vision 2012 more effectively.* The Task Team is already working with a number of creative ideas, and intends drawing up a conceptual framework before the end of June within which the eventual policy proposals will be situated. With their permission I mention here some of the ideas on their list at present.
  - We wish to devote more time and effort to students and staff buying in and acting out the values of our Language Code of Conduct. (In essence this process is no different from the value-driven approach with which student leaders are gradually changing the culture in our residences.)
  - We wish to give more attention to academic literacy, and monitoring the effect of language in the classroom on throughput rates.
  - We wish to get a better grip on the financial factors involved in multilingual education. I can report, for example, that our Division for Institutional Planning has developed an instrument for determining, per teaching module and per discipline, how many students should be enrolled before that module becomes financially viable. I can also report that the case for additional financial support from the state for multilingual universities has already been submitted to the Minister of Education by the HAU-rectors.
  - We wish to develop a better public understanding of the nature and extent of our actions already in place for the promotion of Afrikaans, and we wish to continue expanding and improving these endeavours.

- We wish to develop the “higher functions” and the promotion of Afrikaans as a language of science within the context of our focus areas in research and development. One idea being mentioned in this regard is a “Stellenbosch Foundation for the Promotion of Afrikaans”.
- We wish to give serious attention to the empowerment of financially disadvantaged Afrikaans-speaking students. We have already launched a Partner Schools Project, concentrating on “coloured” Afrikaans-medium schools. First discussions towards the possibility of partnering with the *Stigting vir Bemagtiging deur Afrikaans* have already taken place.

Language policy is a complex matter, and an emotional one. It is also a matter in which the University as a role-player in society has a particular responsibility. I have confidence in the expertise and integrity of our Task Team, and that they will help us to take responsible decisions in the best interest of the University and Afrikaans. It is characteristic of the seriousness with which the Task Team is approaching its work that they recently came forward with the following request:

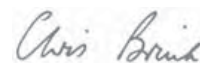
The Task Team has requested that the Vice-Rector (Teaching), as project owner of the language policy revision, should in consultation with the Management undertake a listening tour through the faculties and support sections concerning the revision of the language policy and language plan.

The idea of such a listening tour will be to obtain feedback regarding the conceptual framework which the Task Team intends completing before the end of June, and to get a first-hand impression and solicit ideas regarding the pursuit of item 5 of Vision 2012 in the various academic environments, with a view towards the holistic integration of the eventual recommendations of the Task Team into our overall institutional planning. Arrangements for the listening tour, in which a member of the Task Team will participate, will be made in due course in consultation with the Deans and Section Heads. Outcomes will be fed back to the Task Team.

In the meantime the Task Team has also given notice that they will request Senate to re-affirm its support for the application of the language policy as decided in Senate resolutions during 2005.

Finally: the language issue is surely no less of an emotional issue for many colleagues on campus than what it is in the public domain. However, the discussions on campus have hitherto been conducted with considerably more dignity and professionalism than those in the public media. We can all be proud of that fact. I am confident that we will once again, as we have done before, exercise our minds collectively to good effect.

With thanks and best wishes



Prof Chris Brink  
Rector and Vice-Chancellor.

## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> The full submission by the President and Vice-President of Convocation is available on the web (in Afrikaans only) from the Alumni portal [www.matiesalumni.net](http://www.matiesalumni.net). The proposals quoted here re-emphasize the position adopted at previous meetings of Convocation.

# INTRODUCTION TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESIGNATION

July 2006

I announced my decision to leave Stellenbosch University in the following letter to all students and staff on 4 July 2006. I may add the following personal note to the explanation I gave in that letter.

I knew more or less what I was letting myself in for when I came to Stellenbosch. For the University to make the commitments and promises contained in the Strategic Framework of 2000 was one thing, but implementing them was going to be another thing altogether. It was inevitable that the implementer would become a focus for the wrath of those who either never wished to part of such a process, or else never realised that making such commitments could not leave their own world unchanged.

In retrospect I would say that I underestimated a few things, and overestimated some others. Initially I underestimated the willingness and readiness for transformation amongst the academics on campus. And I totally overestimated the amount of understanding outside the campus about the necessity and extent of transformation that would be required. These two factors, together with my personal approach to change management as transformation rather than reform, meant that the inevitable wrath arising from the changes that needed to be made was perhaps more fierce and personal than might otherwise have been the case. But I cannot complain, since I could at any time have chosen to move more slowly or more circumspectly. It only made me more determined to reach the goals I had set for myself and for the University sooner rather than later.

There is also a personal career aspect at issue. A second term of office at Stellenbosch would have brought me to the age where the international marketability of academic managers starts to decline. The question I had to ask myself, therefore, was whether I would be satisfied to conclude my career at Stellenbosch. As I have said repeatedly, my time at Stellenbosch was the most interesting time of my life, but the possibility of going off somewhere else in the world and doing something interesting once again was equally appealing. When I saw that my goals at Stellenbosch have had largely been attained, the decision was not hard.

I am grateful for everything I learnt at Stellenbosch, and I wish the University all the best.

# Announcement of resignation



**UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY**  
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

4 July 2006

All staff members and all students  
Stellenbosch University  
Stellenbosch 7600

Dear Colleagues and Students

I am writing to inform you that I have been offered today the position of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle in England, as from the middle of 2007.

Newcastle University is one of the Russell group of 19 top universities in Britain. It is a comprehensive research-led institution, with a medical faculty as well as engineering. The University dates back to 1834. Last year the city of Newcastle became one of six "Science Cities" designated by the British Government as the sites for developing the knowledge economy. In Newcastle this has already taken shape in a partnership between the University, the City Council and the Regional Development Board. The new Vice-Chancellor will be expected to play a leading role in this process.

Over the past few weeks, in anticipation of a possible offer, I have reflected deeply on Stellenbosch University, where I have been Vice-Chancellor since January 2002. A year ago I was already able to say in my annual public report that academically the University is doing very well indeed. Since then we have attained a number of further successes, on which I have reported regularly in Senate and Council.

- At the Council meeting of 26 June 2006 the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Prof Walter Claassen, delivered a report from which it is clear that Stellenbosch at present is not only first in South Africa on a number of the standard indicators of research performance, but also that our research performance is still on a rising curve. I mention a few examples here – the complete report of the DVC(Research) is available on the web at <http://www.sun.ac.za/News/dokumente/raad.ppt>.

- We produce more research articles per academic staff member than any other university in the country.
  - Over the past year we delivered more doctoral degrees proportionate to size than any other university in the country.
  - Three of the national Centres of Excellence are currently located at Stellenbosch – and we recently announced that the new National Centre for Theoretical Physics will also be headquartered here at Stellenbosch.
  - Last year we won top honours as the Technologically Most Innovative University in South Africa.
  - Our Business School recently won the coveted full EQUIS accreditation. (Only 92 Business Schools in the world, in 28 countries, can boast full accreditation by EQUIS.)
- Our academic interactions in other African countries have made excellent progress over the past few years. The ASNAPP program (Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural African Plant Products), our African Centre for the Management of HIV/AIDS in the Workplace, our participation in the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, the African Network of Congregational Theology (in the Faculty of Theology), and many other active interactions give us a presence on the rest of the continent which did not exist a few years ago.
  - Our motto of "Your Knowledge Partner" is no idle wish, but a reality: 43% of our total budget comes from third-stream income generated by the academics themselves. The role we play in society is perhaps best shown by the fact that we are the foremost university in the country in respect of interaction with Business and Industry, as reflected by the THRIP awards of the past few years.
  - We have made steady progress in increasing diversity. The number of black postgraduate students have increased by more than 50% over the past four years, and black students now comprise more than 42% of all postgraduates. As regards undergraduates, the percentage of black students crossed the 20% threshold last year (in 2002 the percentage was 14,7%). As regards staff progress has been slower, but still noticeable. There are, for example, considerably more women in senior positions now than just a few years ago.
  - We have developed an integrated approach to planning and budgeting which has been lauded as "best practice". We conduct our affairs according to a 3-year rolling Business Plan for the University. Our internal auditors, KPMG, recently minuted their congratulations to the Management on our financial statements. We are one of only two South African universities who comply with the International Financial Reporting Standards. We are upgrading and extending our sports facilities on a large scale. Our campus remains a showpiece to be proud of.

As you surely know, the topic on which we were most often in the news over the past year has not been our academic achievements, nor our progress with the management of the University, but the role of Afrikaans. As was the case in 2002 when we drew up the language policy, with the 3-year review process now under way there has again been a fair amount of heat and emotion in the language debate. However, I can report that within Council matters have taken a more positive turn

over the past few weeks – as you may have read in the article by our Language Spokesman, Prof Russel Botman, in *Die Burger* and *The Argus* of Saturday 1 July 2006. I also believe that there is now a better understanding than before of the realities we have to cope with in striving to promote Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science. (The recent vote in Senate against a proposal for compulsory proficiency in Afrikaans for all students and all academics would be a case in point.) Whatever may turn out to be the new version of the language policy, I still believe that, as I said as far back as 2001, that language at Stellenbosch should not be regarded as a problem to be solved, but an issue to be managed. The language policy should evolve over time from within the academic community, in conjunction with our other academic goals.

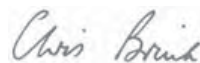
My view is that Stellenbosch University has embarked in a very definite direction, namely the direction of Vision 2012, and that over the past few years we have made considerable progress in realising that vision. I believe that I have made a contribution both in indicating the direction and in taking a number of important steps in that direction. With that, the goals I set for myself in coming to Stellenbosch have largely been achieved.

I therefore intend accepting the position of Vice-Chancellor at Newcastle University.

Some practical consequences should be attended to. Naturally I have consulted with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Council on the matter, and their press release is attached to this letter. According to our procedures, the process of appointing a new Vice-Chancellor should start about a year before the current Vice-Chancellor leaves office. I will remain as Vice-Chancellor while that process takes its course, and depending on how matters develop here and in Newcastle the provisional plan is that I will leave the employment of Stellenbosch University on 30 June 2007. The review process for the language policy continues as at present, and as agreed at the Council meeting of 26 June 2006, under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching), Prof Russel Botman. All other executive and management processes will continue as at present.

There will be other occasions for me to say thank you to the many people to whom I am indebted. For the moment I would simply like to express my appreciation to the Executive, to Senate and to Council. I am grateful for the fact that, on those occasions when really crucial strategic decisions had to be taken, these three bodies invariably decided, after thorough debate, to walk in the same direction as the Rector. That, for me, will remain the crowning achievement of my time at Stellenbosch.

With regards and best wishes



Prof Chris Brink  
Rector and Vice-Chancellor.



# Reaction

## Maties lose Rector to British university

Press release by the Council of Stellenbosch University

The Council of Stellenbosch University announced this afternoon that the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Chris Brink, is to be appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University in England as from mid-2007. Prof. Brink's appointment was ratified in a joint meeting of the Senate and Council of Newcastle University this afternoon (Tuesday 4 July 2006).

Last year the City of Newcastle was designated by the British Government as one of six "Science Cities", where the science-based development of the knowledge economy will be advanced. In Newcastle this will take place as a joint project of the University, the City Council and the Regional Development Board. The new Vice-Chancellor will play a leading role in this respect.

"Under Prof Brink's leadership Stellenbosch University has scaled new academic heights," the Acting Chair of Council, Dr Gerhard van Niekerk, said yesterday. "We regret losing his leadership and strategic thinking, but we are pleased to congratulate him on the achievement of being selected after an international search to lead one of Britain's Science Cities to success."

Dr Van Niekerk pointed out that on a number of key indicators Stellenbosch is at present the best-performing research university in South Africa. According to the latest figures, Stellenbosch now produces more research papers and more doctoral degrees relative to size than any other South African university. Of the seven National Centres of Excellence three are currently based at Stellenbosch. Also, the University won an Award in 2005 as Technologically Most Innovative University in South Africa.

The Chair of Council, Dr Edwin Hertzog, who is in Germany at present, lauded Prof. Brink for his contribution to Stellenbosch University over the past five years. "The Rector developed an integrated approach to planning and budgeting which enabled Stellenbosch to make remarkable progress, even at a time of diminishing state subsidy," Dr Hertzog said. "From a business perspective it is clear that the University has enjoyed excellent management. Not only is the University in sound financial shape, but under Prof. Brink's leadership the University also saw a substantial and simultaneous improvement in its academic achievements and its diversity profile, as well as the role and image of Stellenbosch in the broad South African society and internationally."

As regards the language debate, several commentators pointed out that the tensions of the past few months have recently largely been defused, mainly as a result of a series of one-on-one meetings the Rector conducted with a wide variety of stakeholders, as well as the two special Council discussions on this topic. As reported by the Language Spokesperson, Prof. Russel Botman, the Rector was in a position to ask for a vote in Council on the Conceptual Framework for revising the language policy at the Council meeting of 26 June 2006. However, he decided not to press ahead with such a vote, but instead to invite the Convocation Executive to consider drawing up their own conceptual framework, and to feed it into the existing process of revising the language policy. It is intended that the current revision process should be completed before Prof. Brink vacates his post as rector.

The Chair of Council of Newcastle University, Ms Olivia Grant, said: "Chris Brink is an outstanding academic with an international reputation as a leader in higher education. His appointment underlines our commitment to international excellence and diversity."

The process of appointing a rector and vice-chancellor for Stellenbosch University will start during the second semester, with the aim of having the new appointee in place before 30 June 2007. Prof. Brink will continue to serve as Vice-Chancellor until then.

## Brink lost to Stellenbosch University

### Rector: Attractive offer from Newcastle

*'I had to turn the ship around... and decide whether I wanted to steer it'*

*Die Burger, 5 July 2006*

#### ZELDA JONGBLOED

**CAPE TOWN.-** The rector of the University of Stellenbosch, Prof. Chris Brink, has been lost to the University.

In an e-mail to the US Council, staff and students yesterday it was announced that towards the middle of next year Brink will become the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle in England.

The University of Newcastle is one of England's top tertiary institutions. The appointment is seen not only as a great personal compliment, but also as a compliment for South Africa as a whole.

The immediate reaction to Brink's decision to leave the US was one of shock but also extreme regret that this quality rector has now been lost to Stellenbosch.

In a conversation with *Die Burger* shortly after the offer was made to him yesterday just before 5 o'clock, Brink confirmed that he has accepted the offer. By that time his appointment had already been ratified by a joint sitting of the senate and council of the University of Newcastle. Brink was the only candidate.

The chair of the Council at the University of Newcastle, Ms Olivia Grant, said about him: "Chris Brink is an outstanding academic with an international reputation as a leader in the field of higher education. His appointment confirms our commitment to international excellence and diversity."

Last year the British government named the city of Newcastle as one of six "science cities", where science-based development of the knowledge economy will be promoted.

In Newcastle this will take place as joint project of the University, the city council and the regional development council. The new rector will play a role in launching the project.

Asked about the reasons for his decision, Brink said that "nothing is driving me away". But three factors had come together which led to his decision that it was time to move on. They were the attractive offer from Newcastle, the fact that the US was now academically strong, and the fact that he had already served a full term as rector.

He had come to the US, in "transformation jargon", to turn the ship around.

"This has been done. Now I had to decide whether I wanted to steer it as well!"

Does he see his appointment as a compliment? "It is a compliment to the University of Stellenbosch that what we have done here could be seen in the light of an international framework."

What about the possibility that people would see his acceptance of the offer as a sign of defeat in the language struggle at the US? "If anyone thinks this is a defeat, I would not mind many more such defeats!"

Brink said that the language debate at the US had raged before his arrival and during his term of office, and that it would rage long after he has left.

"This thing will never come to an end. It's not something you can resolve and then tick it off as finalised. Anyway, I do not believe in final solutions."

The current process of revision of the US language policy will probably be completed before Brink leaves office.

According to a Stellenbosch University statement, the process of appointing a new rector for the US will begin during the second semester, with the aim of having a new rector in office before 30 June 2007. Brink will serve as rector until then.

*(With acknowledgement to Die Burger)*

# Chris Brink

*Die Burger* Editorial, 6 July 2006

Prof. Chris Brink's decision to accept the post of Vice-Chancellor at the highly respected University of Newcastle in Britain is a severe blow to Stellenbosch University. It also represents the loss of an academic and an administrator of great stature and accomplishment for South Africa.

One would expect the flames of victory to be burning brightly, especially in the camps of those who criticised him on the language policy of Stellenbosch University – an issue which placed him in the public spotlight more than was justified. It is to his credit that even here his decision is regretted as a loss. He is best described in the words of the Chair of the Council of the University of Newcastle, Ms Olivia Grant: "Chris Brink is an outstanding academic with an international reputation as a leader in the field of higher education. His appointment confirms our commitment to international excellence and diversity." Newcastle's gain, Stellenbosch's loss.

Ironically enough, this is not the way that Brink sees it. He describes his role at Stellenbosch University to date as that of an agent for change who has now completed his task and must make way, as he puts it, for someone else to steer the ship.

No successor can ask for a better platform from which to take Stellenbosch University into the future. One could make an excellent case for the view that under Brink's leadership Stellenbosch University developed into probably the best university in the country, which could easily compete with the best in the world. In a country that has its feet both in the first world and the third world, and that faces complex transformation challenges, this is quite a feat.

Stellenbosch University now faces a huge challenge. People of Brink's calibre are not hanging around in the streets looking for work. It will be necessary to think long and hard to find a suitable successor, who will have to be able to do much more than simply step into Brink's shoes.

# Pissed off with Brink

*Die Matie*, 16 August 2006

The journalist ADRIAAN BASSON was editor of *Die Matie* during Prof. Chris Brink's first term of office as rector at the University of Stellenbosch. "I'm pissed off," he writes, "but I understand".

Shortly after it became known at the end of 2001 that Prof. Chris Brink was one of the three candidates to succeed Prof. Andreas van Wyk as rector of the University of Stellenbosch, I interviewed one of Brink's former colleagues.

"Who is this guy?" I wanted to know.

The praise was unreal. Brilliant academic. Successful manager. Philosopher. "And unashamedly ambitious."

Too ambitious, we now know. This professor with the cherry cheeks, soft voice and unshakable belief that the students, staff and alumni of Stellenbosch University would accompany him in steering the ship of the University of Stellenbosch out of the smelly, stifling little Afrikaner puddle into the open seas of South Africa.

Too ambitious for the retired, frumpy old professors from the Southern Cape who wanted to preserve Stellenbosch at all costs as the last bastion of The Chosen People and their Language.

Too ambitious for the G-string wearing, airgun-armed hostel blokes with their traditions and little secrets and vile sexist breath.

And too ambitious for the (white) establishment of Stellenbosch, who made it clear from the very beginning to Brink and his family that this is "our" place and not "yours".

I'm pissed off that Brink has now resigned.

Pissed off because under his leadership Stellenbosch University for the first time had some legitimacy in the eyes of a large part of our (black) population. Now he is leaving.

Pissed off because he was the first Rector in the history of the University to stand up against the sinister "residence traditions" and had the balls to call this kind of thing by its name – structural violence. Now he is leaving.

Pissed off because he was a Rector who believed that diversity is not only a crucial requirement of the "ANC government", but an indispensable necessity in managing a quality tertiary institution in South Africa.

Now he is leaving. Going to the University of Newcastle in the north-east of England.

And we can already hear the warning of the professional letter writers: don't try your little tricks there, my boy. They'll knock your brains out.

As if the Cape letter writers supposedly know better than Brink himself, or the management and Council of Newcastle what he is letting himself in for.

As if they supposedly know better ...

Brink was recently disparagingly described as "naïve" by a neo-Afrikaner, who had cast his eyes over Brink's brilliant book, *No Lesser Place*. I don't think this is correct.

Not naïve ... but ambitious? Definitely.

I don't need to point out the many academic achievements, research initiatives and institutional changes at the University under Brink's leadership. He wanted to come here to make a difference and he did.

It is a pity that Brink is leaving Stellenbosch University at this point, because the "gates of paradise" (his words) are still only halfway open. But one is only human and I don't know that it's healthy or beneficial for any individual to be subjected so consistently to the fury of the language militants.

How many times must you hear that you are single-handedly responsible for the decline of Afrikaans, that you want to make Stellenbosch "black" (as if this is the Eighth Deadly Sin) and that you are Brink the Stink, before you wake up one day and decide that you have had enough of this crap and that it's time to move on?

How long must your wife and children be victimised in public by good Afrikaans church-going folk before you decide enough is enough?

I'm pissed off with Brink, but I understand.

His resignation leaves Stellenbosch University at a historic crossroads: open the gates of paradise completely (the Brink option) or slam the gates shut in the face of 80%+ of the country's population who have for generations been prevented from becoming Maties.

The choice is Stellenbosch's.

*(With acknowledgement to Die Matie)*

# In Afrikanerdom's crucible

## Did the storm around the language debate impose too great a toll on Stellenbosch's VC?

*Mail & Guardian*, 11 to 17 August 2006

DAVID MACFARLANE

He first experienced a city at the age of 19, learned to speak English at 22, and went abroad (and saw TV) for the first time at 23. Now, at the age of 55, Chris Brink is poised to vacate the vice-chancellorship of Stellenbosch University and take up the equivalent position at Newcastle University in north-east England.

South African academe has been buzzing with speculation since Brink announced his decision last month. Did the "heat and emotion" – Brink's phrase – generated by the language debate at Stellenbosch eventually impose too great a toll on him? And, if so, what does this suggest about South Africa's ability and willingness to cultivate and retain high-quality tertiary leaders?

Brink's trajectory has propelled him from a small-town Afrikaner upbringing in Upington to a sophisticated, cosmopolitan academic career spanning several countries. He is a logician by training, with a formidable academic record. After completing a BSc in maths and computer science at Rand Afrikaans University in 1972, he moved to Rhodes, where in three years he completed a first-class BSc (Honours) in maths, an MSc, also in maths, and an MA in philosophy. His master's degrees were awarded with distinction.

He completed his PhD in algebraic logic at Cambridge University in 1978; and 14 years later notched up another doctorate, an interdisciplinary DPhil from RAU. He has held teaching posts at Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town, and was for three years pro-vice-chancellor at the University of Wollongong in Australia, before taking up Stellenbosch's top post in 2002.

Brink told the *Mail & Guardian*: "I grew up without idols, without conscious role models, and without academic mentors. The main recollection I have is a slow and cumulative process of learning to figure things out for myself."

Such flinty self-sufficiency would soon be pressed into service as Stellenbosch vice-chancellor. At the heart of the storm that broke shortly after he took office was the university's newly adopted policy of teaching in both Afrikaans and English.

For conservatives, this held the threat that Afrikaans would be swamped and marginalised: Stellenbosch's mission, in their view, was to preserve and strengthen an Afrikaner identity under siege since 1994.



Brink gave one measure of the heat generated when he noted in his annual report last year that between 2002 and 2005 *Die Burger* published more than 200 letters per year on Stellenbosch, the "majority of them expressing a negative view of whatever was happening at the university."

Given the flames of emotive rhetoric, Brink's skills as a logician proved invaluable. In May he wrote to the senate objecting to proposals by the university's convocation that both Afrikaans and English proficiency be compulsory for all students and staff.

The proposals amounted, Brink wrote, to forcing non-Afrikaners to learn Afrikaans. If adopted, "the academic business of the university, as well as our shape and size, would be put at risk in a number of ways".

He coolly outlined seven major consequences – including "thousands of postgraduate students disappearing from our campus", the withdrawal of top academics and several undergraduate programmes, and the loss of international accreditations, such as those enjoyed by the university's business school.

"The probability," he concluded, "is that we would shrink to an institution offering not much more than undergraduate teaching in a limited number of standard disciplines, and a few *ad hoc* postgraduate and research initiatives". Faced with this prospect of near annihilation, the senate voted against the proposals in June.

Now Brink suggests some reasons for the heat of the language debate – "idealism, concerns about language loss, language activism, fear of loss of identity, ignorance of the realities of higher education, and simply clinging to the emotional safety blanket of a romanticised Stellenbosch image".

Yet he refuses to fuel speculation that the storm took too great a toll: "There is no single reason why I decided to move on". He concedes that there is "a connection between my decision and the language debate", but insists it was no more significant than the other factors – including the feeling that "I have done my bit" in putting Stellenbosch on a path of growing academic achievement, and that the university now needs a "consolidator".

He is under no illusion that the issue of Afrikaans at Stellenbosch has been settled, however – "it will still be with us five years, 10 years, a generation from now".

And where will Brink and his family be? The Newcastle appointment is open-ended, "until I choose to retire... The odds are we'll be back some time. Besides, we plan to keep our house in Stellenbosch."

# Brink's ideas will remain

*Die Burger*: Readers' opinions, 1 August 2006

**CARLYN HECTOR**, Church Secretary: Volkskerk van Afrika, Ida's Valley

**T**he "Volkskerk van Afrika" [People's Church of Africa] wishes to express its sincere appreciation to Prof. Chris Brink, Rector of Stellenbosch University, for the transformative role that he played in the local community as well as in the University.

Given the milieu in which he had to work, the short time at his disposal and the organised opposition within the University, it is actually remarkable what he was able to do and how many people he could inspire and convince with his vision.

It is a pity that, under the hawkish gaze of the local conservative opposition, he had to pick his way so carefully around the broader Stellenbosch community. Nevertheless, he consulted widely and inspired so many people in the certain knowledge that Stellenbosch University at last had a Rector for whom transformation was not just a word.

We congratulate Brink on his appointment as Rector of the University of Newcastle, and we bid him farewell with the respect he has earned. The words of the proverb are probably quite true: Prophets are not honoured in their own country. Brink is one of a long line of people for whom conditions were made unbearable here. We've been down that road before.

But it is also true that the Lord does not forget those who have done His work with integrity and with honourable intentions. Our church can also bear witness to this. For the moment, Stellenbosch's loss is Newcastle's gain, but the loss is not total.

No one can completely destroy an idea, an ideal, a dream. What has been set in motion develops a momentum of its own, even if from an improbable source.

The ideas, the vision and the resourcefulness which he has stimulated in our midst will not be curbed by force.

It is our prayer that Brink will take his rightful place in the history of Stellenbosch University in the foreseeable future, and that we will be able to continue our association with him, an association that has proved to be so stimulating.

God bless him and his family. He must know that there are many homes in Stellenbosch that will welcome them with open arms.



## Grateful for Brink's role

*Die Burger: Readers' letters, 5 December 2006*

**NICO KOOPMAN**, Stellenbosch

One is filled with gratitude at the role played by Chris Brink as Rector of the University of Stellenbosch over the past few years. He was undoubtedly responsible for progress at our university. He helped to breathe life into the noble vision he formulated before his arrival here.

Under his guidance we advanced in excellence with respect to research, teaching and community interaction.

Although the road ahead is still long, he cultivated an ethos of diversity during his term of office. Of particular importance is the fact that he helped us to see that diversity and excellence are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, diversity of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, age and opinions, among other things, is essential for excellence.

Brink also helped to realise other key elements of the University's vision, such as the development of a greater scientific awareness, with a view to playing a constructive role in South Africa and other African countries. Despite all the suspicions and insinuations around the language issue, he also helped to formulate the guidelines that would give Afrikaans the best chance of growing as an academic language in the context of multilingualism.

The character of societies and institutions is measured by the way in which they cater for the needs of the most vulnerable. This fundamental moral precept is quite evidently one of the central impulses in Brink's temperament.

With discrimination, efficiency, empathy, and lots and lots of courage he took up the cause of justice and generosity for all, especially the most disempowered. If we continue to build on his legacy, this already excellent university will soon become a place where the diversity of South Africa's peoples will increasingly feel at home.



### *PART III*

*The way we knew  
the man -  
his contribution*





# “BRINKMANSHIP”: ANATOMY OF A TRANSFORMER

**WILLIE ESTERHUYSE**, *Philosopher*

I was deeply moved by a letter from Carlyn Hector (*Die Burger*, 1 August 2006), church secretary of the Volkskerk in Afrika (Ida's Valley). This is the church where we as "Goldfielders" – from the University residence Goldfields at the margins of the campus – officially "churched" because then (1989–1996) and for a long time afterwards we did not feel inclined to march to the Student Church. In this letter she praises Brink highly.

A month before the letter appeared I was at a congress of the African National Farmers Union (NAFU), which now collaborates with Agri-SA. There, just like at many other places, I – as "white minority" – experienced the same emotions as I did in reading Hector's letter: we still live in two worlds. Especially in Stellenbosch. The one primarily white; the other black and brown. Worlds with their distinctive interests, understanding of rights and privileges, experiences of the past and especially expectations of the future.

There are many suspension bridges between these two worlds and even a number of solid concrete bridges. Agri-SA and NAFU, for example, are dedicated bridge builders under difficult and extremely complicated circumstances. The dream of a non-racial society and culture is, after all, still only a dream – wonderful and exciting though this dream may be, given the many signs of progress for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. But the non-racial path is long and steep, as Allan Boesak has pointed out so well.

Hector, from the world of the Volkskerk and Ida's Valley, is grateful to Brink. In this world he has support. In the white world of Afrikaners his support was limited, that is, if you read the letter columns of *Die Burger* and senior journalists and the stories from the Stellenbosch University Convocation. He himself has also shown little, if any, understanding of this world, its history, experiences and expectations of the future.

The story about Brink tells us something about the story of our liberated country and the different worlds in which we still live and the conflicting perceptions we still have to deal with. The Afrikaner community that still focuses on "Stellenbosch", for example, was never as divided as during Brink's rectorship. But he did have the Senate and Council behind him. The anti-T-option campaign was nevertheless ultimately also largely a personalised anti-Brink campaign.

Why such divisions? He was too radical a transformer. Radical transformers are thin on the ground in practice. Transformers are also called leaders in transformation. I prefer to talk about transformers, and to distinguish them from reformers and conservers (or trench-diggers). One could, of course distinguish between a whole continuum or spectrum of transformers on the basis of differences in style and strategic objectives.

Transformation leaders are adventurous types; sometimes even brutal and self-assured types. They are experimental, courageous and difficult; not simply dreamers and idealists. They are by definition doers – activists with a vision and a well thought-through strategic plan, different from their predecessors. They do not work in “evolutionary” ways. They work with marking off the limits, discontinuities, demolitions and breakthroughs. The radicals among them have neither sympathy nor respect for comfort zones or the argument that “we have always done it like that”. That is why the emotional intelligence of radical types is not their greatest asset. They follow the consequences of their logic, as they would in solving a mathematical problem.

All transformers live with a philosophy of risk. An example of this is Beyers Naudé, South Africa's greatest moral transformer in Afrikaner circles. He was greater than N.P. van Wyk Louw, who was simply an intellectual reformer.

Transformers are thus in general very different from reformers. Reformers, who can come in many shapes and sizes, such as the “piecemeal” types, basically think in evolutionary terms: “Rome was not built in a day”; “we need to take our people along with us on the road towards innovative change”; “loyal resistance”; “it will take time”; “we need to eat the elephant one piece at a time”; “renewal must not alienate our people.”

Transformers, especially the relentless and radical types, think in a radically constructive way. To express this in biblical language: the walls of Jericho must come down! They promote a well-managed revolution in which the structure, organisational culture, value system and even the staff of an institution are changed radically. In Afrikaner business circles there are a number of examples of recent success stories in this regard. There are also biblical examples. The radical types do not try to buy time. They practise “brinkmanship” time and again.

Was Chris Brink a transformer?

He was indeed – but one of the hurried radical types. Even in his decision to pack his bags and move on to the next big challenge after only one full term of office. Transformers are not people who cling to a position by saying there are still more things they wanted to do. Good transformers move on when their time is over – for example, when the time has come for consolidation and healing within a transformed context and new field of discourse.

Nevertheless, within five years Brink changed radically the organisational culture, context and field of discourse of Stellenbosch University. Very little of this, if anything, can return to the past.

Transformers are not populists. They do not seek popularity, especially not among those of the old order (the conservers). In fact, like Beyers Naudé, they do not try to retain old friends at all costs. They acquire new friends. “Old friends” may well celebrate their achievements many years later, as in the case of Beyers Naudé. But one must add that Brink was not a Beyers Naudé (a theologian), but a mathematician. Too logical!

Brink's transformation project for Stellenbosch University was apparently too comprehensive, too radical and too complex, for someone like me, at any rate, who tried – to no avail – to combine reform and transformation models with one another.



Brink's project included the following, among others:

- Diversity in term of lecturers, administrative staff, students, alliances, language and ideas – according to his concept of merit;
- Inclusive (racial) access to Stellenbosch University;
- Transformation of residence culture;
- Inclusive, national community service;
- Empowerment of those who were previously disadvantaged and excluded;
- Recognition, acceptance and functioning of Stellenbosch University as a national and international asset;
- Integration of Stellenbosch University into a democratised South Africa;
- International competitiveness and excellence;
- Stellenbosch University as South Africa's top research university;
- Stellenbosch University not as an Afrikaans cultural institution, but as a multilingual university that also fosters the interests of Afrikaans.

He did manage to break the impasse in which the University found itself with its wonderful reform initiatives. I want to say: Mike de Vries and Andreas van Wyk prepared the way, but we could not or would not follow through on the path of transformation. Reform is sometimes the spark that ignites transformation. Unfortunately Brink alienated many reformers – not to mention conservers!

Transformers, even the radical types, usually create – even unintentionally – the space for what I will call the innovators, the creators of new social capital in a transformed environment. That is where Stellenbosch University is at the moment. And this is why the University can never be the same again.

The way that the University's transformation project, which has not yet been completed, will be taken forward and consolidated in a way that will establish the University as a sustainable, national, continental and international asset was the strategic issue that was top of the agenda of Brink's transformation programme. But like all good transformers, he should not worry about this any more. It's no longer his problem!

## A LEADER OF STATURE

### EDWIN HERTZOG, *Chair: Stellenbosch University Council*

I have been requested to give my impressions of Chris Brink's "management style as academic as well as executive head of the University". It is necessary to bear in mind, as background, that during the first two years of his term as rector I served as Deputy Chair of the University Council and in the last three years as Chair.

One's first reaction to such a request is simply to write down a few general, heart-warming things about the person concerned. In Chris's case this is easy and I already sent him such a message via e-mail just after he left the Rector's office. In that message I stated in broad terms that within my frame of reference – initially in my career in medicine and then for a long time in the business world – I regard him as one of the most effective, intelligent and pleasant leaders/managers I have ever worked with. And I probably could have left it at that.

But management style is a subject that interests me and forms a part of my daily working environment. It is therefore not difficult for me to explain and expand on the above points. If one takes as one's point of departure that there are usually six different management styles described in the subject journals, I can say the following about Chris and his term as rector of Stellenbosch University.

In the first place he was a particularly clear thinker. He was well known for his simple approach of asking "Where are we, where do we want to be and how do we get there?". During his term of office the University had to move forward in a number of fields. The University's strategic planning document, *A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*, took shape under the guidance of Prof. Bernard Lategan shortly before Chris's appointment. It contains several policy positions that had to be given practical implementation under his leadership. Among the most important of these were greater diversity, greater emphasis on postgraduate study and research, financial sustainability and a sensible language policy that could be implemented.

The latter is naturally the topic with which he is most strongly associated at this stage. As far as I am concerned, this is a pity. He has served the University in an exceptionally capable way in many fields, a fact that will hopefully be brought to the fore more clearly in this book. The language policy and plan formally adopted by the University community during his term of office simply represent a realistic and pragmatic approach. In my view (as also strongly supported by the Senate of the University), it was and remains the correct approach, because it serves the best interests of Stellenbosch University in its current situation. Many Afrikaans language activists are of the view, however, that the University should place the interests of Afrikaans above the interests of the University, or that both interests can be served simultaneously. They then saw in Chris Brink the personification of their common enemy – a perception that I think is incorrect and detrimental to the University. But time will eventually allow a clearer assessment of the situation.

Because he was such a clear thinker, Chris could make plans well. He could also express his ideas quickly with the aid of his laptop computer or with a sketch on a board or on an overhead projector. As academic and executive leader he tried to take people along with him, by means of authoritative and persuasive arguments, on the route towards the achievement of his goal or vision. He was responsible for the University's 5-point vision statement being expressed so clearly as "Vision 2012", and adopted at all levels of decision making within the University. A particularly ingenious document for which he was also primarily responsible is the *Geweegde inkomste en gekontekstualiseerde Fakulteitsaanwysers* [Weighted income and contextualised faculty indicators], according to which faculties receive their allocations from the University's budget. In general, the finances of the University are managed under his direction and that of the Executive Director (Finances) on a particularly sound and sustainable basis, especially when compared with several other South African universities.

With his capable and credible management style, Chris was able to achieve many other laudable goals during his term of office. Here one can refer, for example, to the great progress that the University has made in the field of research (as far as both quality and quantity are concerned), the close co-operation with the Stellenbosch local authorities, the formulation of the sports plan, the greater emphasis on innovation, as well as the various policies which have been implemented, for example, those concerning employment equity, HIV, sexual harassment and community interaction. In addition, the first-year academy has also been established to reduce the drop-out rate of undergraduate students.

In terms of management style, one should also mention that Chris was easily able to shift from one style to another as circumstances demanded. For instance, at one stage he very quickly took a firm stand on issues affecting the Faculty of Military Science, however, is also by nature a "pace-setter": the standards he sets for himself are considerably higher than those most people can maintain. This can naturally lead to tensions on occasion. But at a university of the quality of Stellenbosch University, and given the excellent human capital found there, I believe this never really created a serious problem.

It was a pleasure and a privilege for me to be able to work so closely with him for five years. I hope that his multifaceted talents will still enrich many other people and institutions in the higher education environment.

# SOLID FOUNDATIONS WITH A VIEW TO THE FUTURE

## GERHARD VAN NIEKERK,

*Chair of the Audit Committee, Stellenbosch University Council*

The years 2001-2006 will be remembered in future as a period when Stellenbosch University changed gears. After a few years of reflection on the nature of the institution, its value system and the direction in which it wanted to go in the 21st century, an important document was produced, *A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*. When Chris Brink was appointed in 2001 it was his task to implement this broad framework in practical terms.

Chris Brink was an agent of transformation. In the first place, he came "from the outside" – physically, as someone not infused with Stellenbosch traditions, and psychologically, as someone without the baggage of a long career here and who did not hesitate to give the tree a good shaking on a regular basis.

He applied his innovative and strategic thinking in many fields. Here I can mention the following briefly:

### ■ STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Significant progress was made on this level. The most important aspect was probably the enormous amount of energy expended on the development of the three-year rolling Business Plan. The influential and dynamic Vision 2012 as part of this became the instrument whereby the University could weigh up its strategic decision making. The mutually interdependent items of the five-point agenda had the effect of highlighting not only the aspirations, but also the inevitable relative tensions created by different but concomitant objectives, and also created the instrument to manage them.

The pioneering Strategic Matrix that was developed to assess the financial and strategic contributions of each department is, as far as I know, a unique management instrument of its kind.

With these instruments in place the University could begin to utilise its budget to support its strategic objectives in a meaningful way. The first steps were taken to allocate more resources to the academic business of the University in more purposeful ways, and at the same time the University gained greater control over its own financial future by building discretionary strategic funds into the budget that could be used for strategic projects, or to protect the institution against unexpected shocks.

### ■ TRANSFORMATION

Upon Brink's arrival at Stellenbosch there was a theoretical acceptance of the need for transformation in many fields. Examples would be the diversity of the student body, the diversification of academic staff regarding origin, gender, experience, and so on. It quickly became clear that the

implementation of the objectives did not always enjoy the same support when some of their implications and consequences began to be felt directly and personally.

In this respect Chris was not the kind of person who simply accepted as given the floor plan of the house he moved into. To make room for the new Matie family he knocked down a few walls to create more space and he added a new room or two. As in any building project, the consequence was a certain amount of disruption. The architect's clear vision, however, ensures that the end product will satisfy the needs of the new family.

It is entirely to Brink's credit that, in spite of many setbacks and disappointments, he never abandoned his zeal to achieve what he believed had to be done.

#### ■ LANGUAGE

The debate over the past five years about the Language Policy to a large extent dominated public opinion regarding the University. Better-informed people than me will have more to say about this. Brink's consistent and sustained point of departure was that the University had defined itself as a broad-based, research-driven institution. Accordingly, language is an academic matter that must be managed in the interests of the academy. This means that the University needed a language policy that would serve its academic interests. Included in this point of departure was naturally the requirement that prospective students and academic should not experience language as a mechanism of exclusion. This conflicted with a strong view that the University must adopt a language policy prescribed from outside of the University. In this regard the prophet will one day get the necessary recognition in his own country.

#### ■ MANAGEMENT STYLE

Every manager has a distinctive style that is rooted in his or her training and previous experience. The one aspect that typifies Brink's style for me is his relentlessly logical approach, which sometimes led to great frustration among those who did not have the same skill. His submissions often took the follow form:

Where do we come from?

Where are we now?

Where are we going?

Within this framework he could identify and address the faultlines and discontinuities. His method was often to appoint a task team to investigate a matter, after which a draft policy would be formulated. What always impressed me was Chris's tireless energy to consult as widely as possible. The hours he spent in talks with deans and other bore fruit. The fact that the academic staff supported him time and time again in critical decisions bears witness to this.

As Chair of the Audit Committee, I thought that the establishment of a risk-management system at the University was an extremely important development. Here Brink took the lead personally, with the result that today the University can look back on a number of cases where timely planning warded off negative effects for the University.

I believe that people knew where they stood with him. His subordinates contracted formally with him for the tasks for which they were responsible, and there were regular open discussions with the non-executive council members on the Human Resources committee on his performance. Here he was receptive to constructive criticism and responded promptly.

## **SUMMARY**

Chris Brink can look back with pride on his term as Rector of Stellenbosch University. As Chief Executive Officer, he showed that he was prepared to accept and endure the "loneliness at the top". In the academic field there was consistent progress, so that today the University can hold its head up high among its counterparts in South Africa. In the field of management and finances the University is in an enviable position today. The University is now in a better position to determine its own future, and Brink and his management team must get the credit for that.

The rebuilding of the Matie home that Brink started was carefully thought through. But a great deal remains to be done. His successors will certainly want to alter it in their own way and perhaps even add a few rooms of their own design.

# TOO EARLY, TOO LATE, IN TIME?

**MVULA YOYO,** *Member of Stellenbosch University Council*

Whenever a key appointment is being planned and finalised, the question is always how the new personality is going to affect the culture of the institution or company. Within a context of transformation such an appointment is of cardinal importance for the successful implementation of the institution's transformation agenda.

In Chris Brink's case there were naturally great expectations – in various circles – of the kind of contribution he would make as "the man in charge". But what we all conveniently forget is the fact that no one takes up a position in a vacuum, and in Chris's case it was particularly the Strategic Framework that is significant – a planning document compiled in 2000, two years before Chris was appointed as Rector and Vice-Chancellor. The point of departure for any movement in whatever direction was, and is, this document, which some regard as the "bible" that should determine the future of Stellenbosch University, and lead us to an earthly Canaan. Another important fact directly confronting any new chief executive officer of the University is the perception (fact?) that this institution had remained unaffected as far as transformation issues were concerned in comparison with other universities in the country. As one of the three top universities in the country, specifically at academic level, Stellenbosch University will always be everyone's target – for whatever reason. Within the post-1994 South African context it is especially the association with Afrikaans that will attract attention from various quarters.

From the word go, i.e. during his inauguration speech, Chris made it very clear that we would have to look at transformation issues with new eyes. In a country that had been exposed for hundreds of years to an "either-or" approach, Chris's proposal that we should adopt an "and-and" approach seemed to me a very important statement for a new chief executive officer.

With respect to the first scenario proposed by the title of this piece, I would say that it applies to those who felt that Chris moved too quickly with transformation initiatives during his term of office. The fact of the matter, however, is that he had to decide whether to move at a snail's pace or take the bull by the horns. It is also clear to me that to a large extent Chris tried to apply the "and-and" approach. As far as the language issue and transformation among staff members were concerned, one could say that he was possibly "too early" in the view of some groups at Stellenbosch. Once Chris's intentions regarding these two issues became clear, it was not only the intense debates at various levels, but the ways in which these debates were conducted, that were remarkable. Not only were there personal attacks on Chris as a person, but there was also greater interest in the nominations (and nomination process) of people to serve on the Council.

Another thorny issue that was also addressed head-on was that of campus and residence culture. In this regard Chris was once again ready to deal with the matter directly and, typically, he did not hesitate to make his position clear. This issue was a very challenging one for me personally, as I was

part of a task team that had to advise him on the matter. Although he very clearly did not agree one hundred percent with our proposals, there was a very marked improvement in his relationship with the student body and especially with student leaders. The way he handled this matter made it clear that he was not absolutely inflexible, but was prepared to accept a well argued point of view. And this is perhaps the greatest problem where Chris is concerned: he sometimes reasons and discusses matters at a level above what the ordinary person can understand, and is always ready to state his position, no matter how unpopular it may be!

I don't think anyone can argue that Chris (read: his focus on transformation) was "too late" for Stellenbosch University. What was particularly striking for me was his attitude towards what others might have regarded as a crisis. A remarkable instance is the march led by certain student organisations in 2006 in protest at, among other things, the University's record with respect to transformation issues. Although a number of people were disconcerted at the possibility of march on the campus – especially as this was arranged in collaboration with the ANC Youth League – Chris not only permitted the march, but in fact welcomed it. He saw it as a clear symbol of the University's reaching maturity as one of the higher education institutions in South Africa – what was to take place here, had already been experienced years ago on all other campuses.

Between these two extremes, discussed briefly above, there is a scenario that indicates that Stellenbosch University was ready for Chris Brink. There are many people who feel that Stellenbosch University was not only ready, but in fact benefited from his involvement with the University. The transformation led by Chris was most decidedly not conceived one hundred percent by him – I referred above to the Strategic Framework that had already become a functional document in 2000. Where Chris did in fact play a significant role was in the implementation of the ideas and the direction spelled out or suggested in that document. Compiling such a document is naturally no simple task and requires considerable negotiations, sober (and sometimes not so "sober"!) thinking and heaps of wisdom. Once this great task has been completed, the real work begins, namely giving practical meaning, bit by bit, to the fine, politically correct, written text.

Within a context where it is not only those at grassroots level who have an interest in the transformation of the institution, this implementation phase can be challenging to say the least. Stellenbosch University was (and is) definitely not an exception in this regard. Chris's every move was scrutinised with eagle-eyes by many groups and stakeholders. One could compare this interest in cricketering terms with Australian fielders surrounding a South African bowler, while Shane Warne is descending on him in the dying moments of a tough one-day match in Sydney, Australia. While Chris dealt with most of the deliveries with great circumspection, he often made it clear that he was not going to be intimidated by a Shane Warne or a Glen McGrath! It was especially during the debates on language and transformation issues that it sometimes seemed as if he were going for the bowlers with a vengeance – there are also some fast bowlers in our Council.

Chris Brink was definitely appointed at the right time and, like Madiba, made way in good time for a new leadership!



# BOUNDARIES SHIFT, STELLENBOSCH BECOMES INCLUSIVE

**DAVID PIEDT**, *Member of Stellenbosch University Council*

I became involved with Stellenbosch University rather late. My initial nomination as Council member of the University was made by the NNP premier of the Western Cape at the time. Once my first term had ended, the ANC premier saw fit to appoint me for a second term. It seemed to me that Stellenbosch University was a place exclusively for white Afrikaans people. Apart from demonstrating academic excellence, they also spent their time there designing, studying and implementing the ideology of apartheid.

From the time of Chris's appointment as Rector of Stellenbosch University he began to work systematically and purposefully to introduce the University to the wider South African society. He totally refused to have the University remain part of our history of division, in which ethnic groups were characterised as "good guys" and "bad guys". He shifted his focus to the generally known facts of the past, fixed our attention on new perspectives and contexts, and continually argued for a change of attitudes and more tangible and progressive interaction with the respective communities.

The fundamental changes in South Africa allowed him the opportunity to work resolutely and persistently at introducing a once exclusive place to a larger, more receptive and conciliatory South Africa.

Along with his management team and other role players he managed the University well with respect to the portfolios of teaching, research and operations, including innovation and commercialisation. It is always difficult to reconcile academic priorities with financial realities and other environmental factors, but under his guidance all these initiatives became increasingly successful.

In order to place Stellenbosch University within a wider academic context, Afrikaans as the language of teaching and scholarship came under pressure. The new academic demands and the repositioning of the University led to attention being devoted once again to this sensitive issue. I don't think Chris is indifferent about Afrikaans, because this would be in conflict with Vision 2012. In my view, the idea was that all those who were interested in the future of Afrikaans as language of instruction at Stellenbosch University would have once more to reflect on this issue in a professional and academic way.

His point of departure was that the application of our association with the language should be measured against the realities of today. I would have thought that it was part of the duty of the Rector or Chief Executive Officer to determine what threats and/or benefits this holds for the University and to make recommendations accordingly to those who have the power to take the appropriate decisions. The University's goals, as stated in Vision 2012 and the *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*, bear witness to his vision. These radical initiatives made Chris a persona non grata among a particular section of the white community.

On the other hand, he made friends in places he did not even know about. In these circles there is great admiration for, and appreciation of, the courage and strength he displayed during his term as

Rector of Stellenbosch University. He had incredible expectations for the future of the University and believed passionately in it. His personality was that of an explorer and pioneer, who always looks out over the wide ocean but never forgets that his feet are planted firmly on the beach.

Chris reminded me that you cannot categorically condemn all white people for apartheid. Not everyone agreed with it: some displayed their disapproval clearly; others even expressed their opposition in physical terms. Chris's integrity, independent thinking, value system and sense of justice enabled him to detach himself from a group that was exclusive, with a sense of its own superiority and that always knew better.

These characteristics made him vulnerable and to a large extent isolated. In my modest opinion, his departure is seen by many of his fellow Afrikaners as a victory against his progressiveness and attempts to change the *status quo*. But Stellenbosch University needed someone of Chris's calibre, who could work tirelessly and in the face of great resistance to establish the University within its new context, and who would not shy away from a challenge. It was inevitable that Stellenbosch University had to change direction, and so he was the right man at the right time.

The journey towards change and innovation is by no means completed, because a group moves much more slowly than an individual. I shall remember Chris for the unequivocal leadership he showed over and over again even during the most unpleasant times, and also for his ability to analyse a situation on the basis of the prevailing realities and not through artificial arguments based on traditional, historical or emotional conservatism.

He set his sights even further than he could see, and even though he could not do everything he envisaged, he most decidedly did something for which we shall remember him for a very long time: under his leadership an extensive, representative network developed at all levels and in all spheres of the University community. This network facilitated communication and consultation. Chris gave me the impression that he would never jeopardise the University in order to achieve his particular goals. He was eager to see the University as one of the most effective institutions of higher education in Africa, and he also wanted to make us internationally competitive. People differed from him in terms of his approach in this regard, but no one could accuse him of being disloyal to the University.

My prayer is that the Lord will bless him richly in his new field of work and that his labour will bear fruit abundantly, and that as a family they will adapt quickly and prosper.

## CHRIS – OR JANUS?

**LIESBETH BOTHA**, *Executive Director: Innovation and Commercialisation at Stellenbosch University, and member of the Rector's Management Team*

My journey with Chris through the multifaceted Stellenbosch landscape began in 2002. This was when I asked him to act as referee for me in my application for the post of Dean of the Engineering Faculty at the University of Pretoria. He said he would do so "with pleasure", but asked whether I did not rather want to apply to Stellenbosch University, with the idea that we could then work closely together to achieve his ideals for the University. The journey to my current position as Executive Director: Innovation and Commercialisation (not via a deanship, in the event) was in itself a steep learning curve for both of us. He learned very quickly that it was no simple matter, and sometimes impossible, to get members of the University to buy into what were for him obvious transformation ideals. A woman dean appointed on merit to a management body consisting only of men was surely a first-class idea – or was it?

I remember how idealistic he was five years ago, as I was too, about the pace at which he could guide transformation. Early in his term of office already he was very explicit about what transformation meant in the university context, in other words, what changes were necessary so that Stellenbosch University could achieve what was termed Vision 2012 – how, by striving to realise these five points of the vision statement, we could become an even more outstanding university in research, teaching and learning, and community interaction. Chris publicised this widely and we, his colleagues in management, joined in enthusiastically, because this was (and is) also our vision. Chris stuck to his guns as far as Vision 2012 was concerned, and over five years this vision statement guided him and us in designing our strategies and making our decisions.

Chris is a master in designing and planning a strategy – his approach always made sense to me, mirroring as it did the vision statement. He could set out all his plans so neatly and logically – one could not help but admire the clarity of his thinking. I met Dr Mamphela Ramphela (Rector of the University of Cape Town when Chris was head of the Department of Mathematics there in the 1990s) at a graduation ceremony, and we spoke about Chris. Mamphela's words were: "Ah, my friend Chris, yes, the man with the tidy mind." This sums up a large part of Chris's make-up very *neatly* indeed!

The transformation projects that I undertook with him included the revision of the residence placement policy as an instrument for transforming residence culture and to make the residences more accessible, the development of a business plan at the Faculty of Health Sciences to release more funds for strategic projects and open up time for academics, and the systematic redesign and rightsizing of support divisions so that they could function more appropriately and cost effectively. The strategies designed were masterly. It always seemed to me as if he could do this kind of thing almost effortlessly.

For me the more difficult part of the process was to participate in (and sometimes lead) the team responsible for implementing the changes and projects on the agenda. All change is difficult, particularly because people's responses to it and rates of acceptance differ so radically. This predictably led to sharp criticism of the changes and also of the agents of change. Not even thorough consultation, careful deliberation and careful management of the changes were ever enough to satisfy the craving for more of the same among the people on whom the changes had an impact. It seems that communication of the reasons for the changes and their objectives can never be sufficient in an environment with such divergent interest groups and a collegial culture such as that of Stellenbosch University.

What happened to Chris's image in the media (specifically *Die Burger* and *Rapport*), among some academics and in Convocation to a large extent remains a mystery to me, but also becomes an object lesson in managing transformation. It's almost as if he became a Janus figure.<sup>1</sup> I have never seen such a clear manifestation of the cynical remark that "no good deed goes unpunished". You can, as it were, manage yourself right out of a position by doing not the popular thing, but the "right" thing. The people who know Chris well have no doubt whatsoever about his good intentions and dedication to the ideal of University of Stellenbosch as an institution of excellence. In spite of everything he did and sacrificed for the sake of this ideal, and regardless of his true integrity and intelligence, the media (especially the letter columns of *Die Burger*, but also in the news reports) projected him as a cold and calculating anti-Afrikaans rebel, hostile towards the University, and taking decisions without thinking them through and without being transparent about them, as if he were merely serving his own interests without consulting others.

The aim of Vision 2012 is to articulate clearly the direction in which the Management wishes to lead the University. Language, as one of the five points in Vision 2012, thus had to be managed, and in 2002 Chris initiated this process in his logical way by launching an investigation into the state of language use at the University. Gradually the media, certain groups within and outside of the University, and certain individuals began to lay the blame for the results of the survey on the status quo at Chris's door, as if he were the architect of an "englishification" (*verengelsing*) of Stellenbosch University, which he encountered here at the beginning of his term as rector. After that nothing could restore his image in this regard. By the end of 2006 the situation had become so absurd that one member of the University Council referred in an official Convocation document to Management's "agenda of englishification" under Chris's leadership, as if this were a well-known fact. The opposite is true. As with all the other points of Vision 2012, Management (and one hopes the vast majority of staff, students and stakeholders) strives to promote Afrikaans as language of instruction and scientific endeavour in a multilingual context at the University. But the other points of the vision statement, as Chris always emphasised, are not subordinate to the point about Afrikaans, and furthermore, language should always serve the interests of the academic core of the University, and not the other way round. This message has knowingly or unknowingly been misunderstood and misinterpreted in so many ways that the whole issue has reached the point of absurdity.

Under Chris's leadership many of us learned what leadership in transformation means. He was able to take the lead, because he believed in transformation in the depths of his heart. This is mentioned time and again by Chris's brown or black colleagues, and often by our colleague and friend, Dr Edna van

Harte (first Chris's personal assistant, later Student Dean and currently Dean of the Faculty of Military Science). Given her past in the struggle, she will recognise a comrade in transformation when she sees him.

But it was not only newcomers such as Edna and I who saw Chris's true worth, but also "true" (older) Stellenboschers. At the final meeting of the Senate and the Executive Committee of the Senate (EC(S)) it is customary for the rector's longest-serving colleague to wish the rector compliments of the season. At one such meeting of the EC(S) Prof. Tom Park, at that time Dean of the Education Faculty, saw Chris off with the following oration (with apologies to Solomon<sup>2</sup>):

Who can find a virtuous rector? for his price is worth more than deans.

His Senate does safely trust in him and plucks the fruit of his work.

He will do the University good, and not evil, all the days of his life.

He gathers teaching inputs and outputs, and enjoys determining the financial drivers.

He is like the merchant ships: he brings in funds from afar.

He rises while it is yet night and calculates the allocations for his faculties; even his support services get their portion.

He tackles rightsizing with energy; he can turn his hand to anything.

He ascertains whether the short- and long-term operating targets are reasonable; his candle goes not out by night.

He works with the computer; he busies his hands with a three-year rolling business plan.

He stretches out a hand to lecturers, and to others who are needy.

He makes for himself business plans and his clothing is exclusively from Gucci and Armani.

He is known to HESA,<sup>3</sup> where he consults with HE<sup>4</sup> leaders.

Everything about him bespeaks a strong and noble character; he knows no fear of the future.

Out of his mouth comes wisdom; if he leads, it is with love.

He watches well over the Language Policy; the bread of idleness he eats not.

His Convocation praises him; the HEQC<sup>5</sup> admires him:

"Many fine rectors there are, Chris, but you excel them all!"

This humorous passage reveals quite openly and clearly the respect and even admiration that Chris's esteemed and distinguished academic colleagues have for him.

Chris left Stellenbosch University a better place than he found it, and the personal price he paid for that for some time was probably high. I believe that when the malice, the gossip, *Die Burger* and the Convocation begin to fade in the memories of Chris and his wife, Tobea, they will remember his successes in the transformation of the University, the appreciation of his colleagues, the interesting academic debates that did take place, and the beautiful environment, and they will think back on this as a necessary and ultimately triumphant period in their own and the University's history.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In Roman mythology the god Janus was usually represented with two faces, one looking to the front and the other to the back. He is used to symbolise change, as well as transitions such as the progression from the past to the future, from one condition to another, from one vision to another, the achievement of maturity in young people, and the transfer from one universe to another (Wikipedia). In colloquial language this two-faced nature of Janus has also come to imply hypocrisy and deceitfulness.
- <sup>2</sup> Proverbs 31:10-31
- <sup>3</sup> HESA = Higher Education South Africa (group of all Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of South African universities)
- <sup>4</sup> HE = higher education
- <sup>5</sup> HEQC = Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council for Higher Education, responsible for institutional audits.

## UNIQUE IN APPROACH AND STYLE

**LEOPOLDT VAN HUYSSTEEN,** *Dean: Faculty of Agrisciences, SU*

As far as I am concerned, Chris Brink is who he is because he tackles things with a unique approach and style. I think he was a situational leader who was able to persuade others through the force of his arguments. One of his strong points was his ability to work with ideas and concepts. He was thus able to give direction clearly by way of the necessary directives and logic in the light of the vision statement which had already been compiled.

What I appreciated about his leadership style was that I always knew what he wanted to do and also understood the why, because he always set objectives, or created the space for one to set one's own objectives, in terms of the implied positions of Vision 2012. One of his special leadership features that I experienced was his ability to listen when he was informed that we were getting stuck with something serious. There was always enough space for me to differ from him, when and where necessary, and to put the other side of the case. He was sensitive to "red lights flashing" and was then prepared to respond and act to manage the situation. Your facts and plans naturally had to be correct and in order if you wanted to raise such an issue with him and wanted a change in approach or style, or simply a change in the time lines.

Chris had a great deal of courage and was not scared to stick to a point of view if he believed in something. With these characteristics, he let the pendulum swing past the point of balance on several occasions just to get things going. Sometimes I thought this was unnecessary and excessive, but then one could present good arguments and proposals to strike a new and better balance.

He is a good researcher. His sense of, and commitment to, research was a special asset in times when difficult decisions had to be taken, for example, when the SET<sup>1</sup> faculties were in danger of suffering serious damage as a consequence of the drastic implications of a budget decision. He had an insight into research environments and could express such insights well, for example, in explaining the "pain factor" when significant intervention was necessary to cut our expenditure and streamline our activities in such a way that we could balance the budget and ensure the long-term financial health of the University. At a time when academics were uncomfortable about why departments had to merge, he argued that the "feet-dragging factor" was one of the most important reasons. In my view, his research directives were implemented well by the respective environments. This found expression in the system of business plans to "move away from a business-as-usual mindset towards a differentiated approach to our core business, the academy".

One of the important innovative directives issued under his leadership was the establishment of a dedicated division for Innovation and Commercialisation to unlock the wonderful potential of the University's research output as commercial opportunities and to set it up in such a way that sustainable funding streams could be generated. In this way, as well as through other integrative directives, a

climate was created in which we could manage our research as cost effectively as possible and like a business.

## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> SET "Science, Engineering and Technology"



## CHALLENGING AND INSPIRING

**TOM PARK,** *Former Dean: Education Faculty, SU*

It is difficult to do justice in a few paragraphs to the significant leadership role that Prof. Chris Brink played as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch, especially because the impact of some of the adjustments that he initiated may be felt only much later.

There is usually little value in assessing a leader without taking into account the context within which he or she functioned. This also makes the comparison of leaders, whether political or academic, very difficult, seeing that each leader had to operate under a different set of environmental variables, which made their own distinctive demands. Chris Brink's term as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch has been characterised as a time in which the essential transformation of the South African higher education system was not only gaining momentum, but also emerged as a decisive factor.

During Brink's term of office the Council of Higher Education's Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), which manages the accreditation of programmes as well as the institutional audits of higher education institutions in South Africa, began to play a significant role in the establishment of more formal quality-assurance mechanisms at universities. The HEQC's frameworks and criteria for the assessment of the quality of programmes and institutions is embedded in the government's policy for the transformation of higher education, which has its aim, among other things, to broaden access to higher education, in particular for previously disadvantaged groups, and to increase the throughput rate of students. Against the background of the apparent tension between the striving for greater inclusiveness and assuring quality, Brink steered the ship of this University between the proverbial *Scylla* and *Charybdis* in a most competent and responsible way.

Chris Brink's appointment to the University meant that he had received a mandate from the Council to implement, as the academic leader of the institution, the University's strategic plan, which was contained in the document entitled *A Strategic Plan for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*. One of his greatest contributions as leader/manager in education in this regard was to develop, through a process of participatory management, a five-point vision statement, known as Vision 2012. This vision statement was influential in establishing the University as an excellent academic institution and respected knowledge partner that not only helped to build up the scientific, technological and intellectual capacity of Africa, but was also an active role player in South African society. At the same time Vision 2012 confirmed quite clearly that the University wanted to establish a campus culture that would welcome a diversity of people and ideas, and promote Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context.

As leader and manager, therefore, he spelled out early in his term of office the direction for the University by means of a simple vision statement to the Council, academics, support staff and students. This also led to the University's Business Plan being anchored in this vision statement and an attempt

to manage the University's financial and human resources in such a way that Vision 2012 could be realised. Chris Brink's broad knowledge of the university sector enabled him time and again to relate this vision to the realities of contemporary education. He was thus often able to convert challenges into opportunities for the University.

It was always clear from the way that Chris Brink managed faculties and the support environment that he gave a high priority to the role of the University as a research institution and agent for innovation. Along with this, as an A-rated scientist he was a strong role model for young as well as established researchers. The result of this was that during the Brink era the research outputs of the University increased even further, in accordance with its striving to be an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner. At present the University is one of the top research universities in Southern Africa, measured in terms of a variety of research output criteria.

Against the background of Vision 2012, Chris Brink's confidence in the University's ability not only to make a difference in students' lives, but also to have a decisive impact on Southern Africa, was infectious and as a leader he inspired others to achieve these goals. His strategies and working methods to realise the aspirations of Vision 2012 were often controversial and unpopular, which meant that he often faced serious criticism from some of the University's employees, but especially also from alumni. Although he was by no means indifferent to this criticism, he had an unshakable belief in the direction in which he was leading the University. In spite of this sometimes negative criticism, he always remained cool and calm, and in contrast with some of his most severe critics, he never tackled the individual, but always kept his eye on the proverbial ball. The professional way in which he handled the sometimes denigrating and often grossly personal remarks of his opponents were sure signs of his academic leadership.

True to Vision 2012, which also casts the University as an active role player in the development of South African society, Chris Brink not only worked for the welfare of the University, but also spent much of his time and energy as a community leader, in collaboration with the local authorities, to make Stellenbosch the place of choice for students. He took a great deal of trouble to heal the divisions among the various communities in Stellenbosch that had developed as a consequence of the political injustices of the past.

I believe that many of the University's initiatives and activities will in the future still be based on the values established through Chris Brink's leadership. Although there will have to be adjustments for the University to remain relevant, the basic values that he established will remain influential in guiding the University of Stellenbosch.

Although we are very aware of the fact that we will be poorer in terms of wisdom and leadership once he leaves, I sincerely want to wish Chris and Tobeia Brink strength and success in this new phase of their lives.

# CHRIS BRINK: CAPTAIN OF HOPE

**ELNA MOUTON**, *Dean: Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University*

## *A people's person*

Shortly before Prof. Chris Brink accepted the appointment as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in 2002, he paid a reconnaissance visit to Matieland. "Camouflaged" in informal summer clothes he strolled casually around the campus and, like an old friend, chatted with all and sundry like an old friend. Thus he also arrived at the Faculty of Theology and introduced himself as "Chris Brink" to the students lounging about. Some of them realised only later – somewhat bewildered – who this stranger was who engaged with them so casually, but with such intense focus ...

Chris Brink is an easy-going, empathetic person, who befriended the Stellenbosch community with his characteristic ability to join people where they are and walk their road with them. This is the way with metaphors as well as with leaders who can inspire and help to open up horizons. They take you from the known to a new world ... What is Chris Brink's secret? How did he manage to navigate the (heavily overloaded) Matie ship through the rocks and waves of profound and sometimes even painful transformation and rightsizing processes towards a new, more hopeful course? How was it possible to rebuild the ship while it was still at sea and to ditch excessive baggage – including ideological baggage?

Perhaps simplicity in the richest sense of the word is Brink's strongest trait – a kind of simplicity in the midst of complexity, which a lot of people could identify with and which made it possible to move forward. For example, it was important for him that the University's Vision 2012 should have no more than five points, because "There is a good reason that one has five fingers on each hand". After complicated debates in the Senate and Institutional Forum, he could sum up the core of an issue with absolute clarity and wisdom, often with the help of certain key words written on a little card taken from his pocket. This was also the kind of atmosphere that he created during discussions at the round table in his office – unthinkable without the much loved little pot of tea which made everyone feel so at home.

## *Rightsizing at Stellenbosch University*

With the guidance of the Senior Director: Finances, Prof. Estian Calitz, it was established early in the third millennium that expenditure at Stellenbosch University was gradually exceeding income, and that this placed the University's finances at risk. I recall with amazement how Prof. Brink, as Rector, managed the protracted rightsizing process that followed with his exceptional ability to listen, a profoundly professional approach, and a fair yet firm purposefulness.

For a small faculty such as Theology the outcome of this process was by no means self-evident – the purpose of rightsizing after all is “to prune for growth”. But then an amazing thing happened. Somewhere along the line the Rector, with his fine powers of observation, realised that the symbolic value of the Faculty of Theology was far greater than its humble student numbers. Which is why he decided at a particular point to finalise the process around *ten* faculties – including Theology! This was a brave step in a hyper-complex process and a position that the Rector often accounted for in public platforms. It can thus be said with certainty that the Faculty of Theology owes its existence in the year 2007, at the end of Chris Brink’s term of office, to his good judgement.

But true to the nature of a rightsizing process, negotiations began immediately about how such a small faculty as Theology could be operated in a sustainable way. In line with other faculties that had to consolidate departments, Prof. Brink requested Theology to manage the three traditional departments in an academically and economically sustainable way by means of a “flatter structure”, with clear goals for the future. As Rector he deserves our sincere gratitude and respect for the way in which he put this (inevitable) challenge to Theology, and for the support put in place to assist with the implementation process.

#### *Promotion of diversity*

Along with his emphasis on simplicity and clear communication, and a firm, fair and consistent management style, Chris Brink’s leadership has been characterised by a kind of intrepid, unintimidated, radical promotion of diversity on the Matie campus. With his free spirit and international experience he felt, it was non-negotiable for him that the totality of disciplines, points of view, cultures, languages and educational needs of all communities should be respected and served in the best way possible on this campus. In the process we learned to know him as someone who can think in a nuanced way, who can see the bigger picture, who can read a whole mosaic of contexts and trends and not shy away from the challenges they represent – but also as someone broad-minded enough to be able to respect decisions even if he does not necessarily agree with them.

It was within this conceptual framework that he had the courage and integrity to promote Afrikaans as a language of scholarship within a multilingual context (one of Stellenbosch University’s goals stated in Vision 2012). He deserves the country’s respect for the way in which he conducted himself in the so-called language debate. Furthermore, to find the time as Rector to write a book on the language debate at Stellenbosch is simply remarkable! In fact, one could say that Chris Brink has distinguished himself as someone who used language to create a dwelling in which everyone could live. In this sense every speech and open letter from him to staff and students was a work of art in its own right.

A classic example for Theology is that he took the initiative not only to encourage the Faculty to appoint the first woman dean at Stellenbosch, but also to bring the formerly “part-time” three-year term of office for the dean in line with other faculties by recommending it to the University Council as a “five-year term of office with limited academic duties”. This may sound like a purely technical shift, but ultimately this kind of language innovation contributed to the creation of an environment in which faculties and individuals could work together as equal partners. It is clear that he not only changed the direction of the ship, but that he helped to build a new ship that could sail with greater

suppleness and speed, and that will hopefully be able to meet Southern Africa's growing opportunities and challenges more effectively.

We honour Chris Brink's contribution, which has created hope in a watershed moment in Stellenbosch University's history. We wish him practical wisdom and fulfilment in his new working environment at the University of Newcastle, England.

# NOT ONLY TO INTERPRET STELLENBOSCH, BUT TO CHANGE IT

**ANTON VAN NIEKERK**, *Professor in Philosophy,  
Senate Representative in the Council, and Chair of the Language Committee*

As far as I am aware, Chris Brink's term of office (2002-2007) was the shortest of any of the Stellenbosch University rectors. It was probably also the most controversial. Yet I have very little doubt that it will be remembered as one of the most important periods in the recent history of the University. This is because Brink took the lead in the essential process of beginning to transform the University – a process which had been postponed for too long at Stellenbosch. This transformation was and is essential to make Stellenbosch a university that is not only a national asset in the service of the whole of South African society, but wholly a part of the worldwide community of universities that increasingly function in terms of international interaction. There are many people who care a great deal about Stellenbosch University and do not like Brink. But I have no doubt that over the longer term we shall be sincerely grateful for the way in which he broke the ice so that the academic rapids will be considerably more navigable for the University in the future.

It is generally known that when Brink was being considered for the post of rector, I supported another candidate – not because I had anything against Brink, but because the idea of appointing someone from outside as rector of Stellenbosch University seemed somewhat farfetched even to me. Stellenbosch is not a big place, but it is a complex place. The wars that erupted during Brink's term of office showed that it could also be a "stuffy little village", as a friend of mine remarked. For someone to come here from the outside, establish his credibility among all factions and then also do what all reasonable Stellenboschers knew in their heart of hearts that the new Rector had to do, demanded more than can reasonably be expected of flesh and blood to endure.

The image of "outsider" is also one that, I think, Chris was never able to shake off entirely. I would like to make two critical comments in this regard. Firstly, I think that it took Chris too long to begin to speak of Stellenbosch University as "us". It may well be that some of the antagonism that Chris encountered at Stellenbosch would have been less intense, or even absent, if he had created the impression sooner that he was acting in *bona fide* solidarity with the University.

My second critical remark stems from the privilege I had of often being asked by him to read the first versions of his documents and speeches critically. The one point where I often differed from him was that he was inclined, in my opinion, to speak about the history of Stellenbosch University in a way that was insufficiently nuanced. The University has a past that, because of the association of many Stellenboschers with the apartheid dispensation, was not always particularly edifying. But at the same time there was another, second strand in Stellenbosch's past: the strand including people such as Bennie Keet, Johannes Degenaar, S.P. Cilliers, Willie Jonker and Willie Esterhuyse; people who have been at the forefront of Afrikaner self-criticism since the 1950s and 1960s, and who exerted a reforming influence on other Afrikaners and more widely in South Africa

– from Stellenbosch. Chris would have aroused less rancour if he had acknowledged this “second strand” more readily.

Yet on reflection I realise that it was probably a blessing in disguise that Brink did not worry too much about whether he was causing irritation. He was quite explicit about not wanting to compromise by continually arguing “Yes, we need to change, but...”. He quite deliberately chose not to be a “Yes, but” reformer. At the time of his arrival in 2002, certain things on this campus – the lack of diversity of students and staff, the image of the University internationally and among the majority of South Africans, and the position of women – were quite simply unacceptable and had to start changing dramatically.

Radical reformers, such as Lincoln and Gorbachev, do not have a long shelf life. As we know all too well, they are hated by those who think they are moving too fast as much as by those who think they are moving too slowly. They break the ice, but this hurts – they hurt not only people who have other ideas; they also hurt themselves. This is the fate of radical reformers. They will not see the liberation and joy stemming from the new possibilities that they have created. But the world is a better and more just place as a result of their work. Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach can be adapted to apply most pertinently to Chris, namely that he did not only want to interpret Stellenbosch, he wanted to change it.

We will not easily forget Chris Brink, because – in addition to his purposefulness and drive – he brought gifts and talents to his position that were almost unequalled. I am naturally biased in this judgement, because few things gave me such pleasure as seeing a brilliant philosopher develop his arguments and views with an incomparably compelling logic. Chris has a flame-sharp, forceful and ultimately overwhelming intellect. This is linked to a sustained phlegmatic disposition and a calm, composed tone of voice. He carries you along with him through the usually unimpeachable logic of his argument. Stellenbosch University was exceptionally fortunate, in the midst of its struggle to reform, to receive guidance from someone who could state the issue at stake so clearly and convincingly.

Chris managed remarkable achievements during his term of office. Stellenbosch University’s diversity profile changed markedly, even though it is by no means ideal yet. He established an academically driven management corps, financial dispensation and budget. He guided the formulation of a clear and attainable vision and mission statement, expressed in Vision 2012, that could be implemented and steer management. And he turned the campus upside down by stimulating, for the first time, a serious debate on the medium of instruction – not, as many apparently think, to harm or to phase out Afrikaans, but to initiate the debate on how Stellenbosch wants to see and position itself as a South African university that must compete internationally.

No matter how outsiders judge Chris’s contribution to the language debate, in my opinion he succeeded in making the Stellenbosch academic community aware of the danger of unacceptably binding the University to an ethnically oriented cultural community. However laudable the struggle for the protection and preservation of Afrikaans may be in itself, a university is not the place where that struggle must be waged. A university cannot save Afrikaans; only the Afrikaans speakers in the country can do so. Afrikaans, like English and Xhosa, is more than welcome at Stellenbosch, but the language must serve the academy, not the other way round. Once this simple, sober and undeniable insight finally takes root at Stellenbosch University and among its supporters, Chris Brink’s legacy will be complete.

## A FRESH PATH OF INNOVATION

**JAN DU TOIT**, *Director: Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management, SU*

Shortly after Chris Brink started work as the Rector of Stellenbosch University, my colleague, Johan Augustyn and I found ourselves in his office on behalf of the Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management. He calmly poured us each a glass of wine and opened a packet of biltong – definitely a novelty for us in a rector's office!

That visit actually sums up my experience of Chris's approach as Rector: innovative, interested, involved. It was the result of a campus-wide invitation from Chris even before he arrived in South Africa from Australia. He encouraged role players at the University to make contact with him so that he could be informed on how things are related to one another, and what the focal points and priorities were.

Those of us at the Africa Centre did not wait for a second invitation. We sent reports on our successful annual summer schools and informed him about what we were doing in the field of HIV/Aids. At that time the Centre, very much in its infancy, was still a subdivision of the Department of Industrial Psychology and finding its feet. The retiring Rector, Andreas van Wyk, was well disposed towards us, and it was important for us to build on those solid foundations. Chris in fact supported us unconditionally and made available essential bridging finance.

Demographically the Africa Centre did not really fit into the traditional image of Matieland. In 2006/2007 students came from 21 countries (15 of them in Africa). They represented 84 professions and spoke 56 languages. Their average age was 43. 99% of the students were black and 82% were women. The places of employment of these students represent some six million people, which creates exciting possibilities for the impact that the course can – and must – have beyond the academic world.

This was the kind of innovation and grassroots impact that Chris understood. He realised that the ship had to be steered in a different direction and did not hesitate to take the necessary steps to bring that about. He made people think and, as it were, lifted them out of their comfort zones. Many people, including those with influence, experienced this as positive. Others thought he was scratching where it wasn't itching. Be that as it may, Chris believed that tertiary institutions had to help rectify the inequalities of the past, and that we first had to sweep in front of our own doors by, for example, becoming involved with other universities in South Africa and the rest of Africa.

In line with this, from September this year the Africa Centre's Postgraduate Diploma in the Management HIV/Aids (PDM) and MPhil courses will be combined as a Master's course extending over two years and duplicated at the University of Legon in Ghana. The whole course will be available on Stellenbosch University's WebCT system. The target group is the English-speaking countries in West Africa, including Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia.



Internally there was the controversial language debate, which was not always understood in context and with all its practical implications. Our Centre is a fine example of diversity – if all Maties had to be proficient in Afrikaans, we would have to shut our doors. And apart from the fact that we offer a unique course and related services globally, we undoubtedly have an impact on the reality of the world of work. We need only look at our former students and the difference they make with practical interventions such as writing HIV/Aids policies for their organisations, awareness raising and the implementation of management skills.

The Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management was established in 2003 with a postgraduate diploma in the management of HIV/Aids in the workplace as primary focus. This year-long and mainly web-based course has since been expanded into a component of a Master's degree. The academic programme has already produced 1732 students, including 64 Master's students. The Centre is also actively involved in research activities and community mobilisation, including the use of educational theatre.

Chris also understood these two aspects of the Centre's constitution well; they were in fact two points he focused on as Rector. He consistently emphasised the importance of research, as well as the academic institution's involvement with the community.

He is a perfectionist, businesslike and to the point. At the beginning I often tried to explain to him how important our work was. He then always interrupted and said, somewhat impatiently: "Carry on, you don't have to persuade me that what you are doing is important". In fact, he often used the Africa Centre as an example of excellence in the University Council and Senate.

Chris liked a new challenge, sailing into uncharted waters. The Africa Centre could identify with that, because we also often had to "make" new rules and sometimes break rules in order to survive. As far as processes and procedures were concerned, this meant that we were sometimes on the carpet, but Chris often saved the day for us. Because he understood innovation, he understood that new initiatives often cause friction within the existing system.

My colleagues and I often had discussions with Chris. We had problems with our former partner; we initially struggled in our attempts to establish our work further in Africa; and we were often caught up in a situation for which the bureaucratic rules of the University did not make provision. Regardless of the problem, we always said to him at the start of a meeting that we had good news to share with him, and then informed him about another success story of the Africa Centre. This approach often took the wind out of Chris's sails and we then got what we came to ask for. Not undeservedly, I might add. Chris was, in any event, not a person who would fall for soft-soaping.

There were certainly also times when he did not like what the Africa Centre was doing. He approached our official opening somewhat gingerly – it was a big party held in the H.B. Thom Theatre, unheard of for a single department or centre. The former Deputy President, Mr Jacob Zuma, was the guest speaker and Chris had to act as host. When Jimmie Earl Perry, the Centre's Director of Educational Theatre and Creative Arts, commented innocently that it was high time that the theatre was livened up a bit, Chris grumbled quietly but nevertheless pressed on. He referred to the Centre's first World Aids Day concert at the end of 2005 as "a risk for the University, but a risk that had to be managed". For last year's follow-up concert he sent members of his top management to attend.

Chris Brink's door has always been open to us. He was more accessible than any of his predecessors. I would sometimes meet him in the supermarket, where he would start chatting and often ask about our activities. When I got back to the office, there would sometimes be an email in which he would ask for more details. He made a point of being really well informed and always showed a strong and genuine interest. These were characteristics that were of inestimable value for us, and on behalf of the Africa Centre we wish him strength and success.

# MOVING BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

**EDNA VAN HARTE**, *Dean: Faculty of Military Sciences, SU*

I was appointed as Executive Assistant to Professor Chris Brink, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, in July 2002 and assisted him with transformation initiatives as part of my brief. In the process I was privileged to experience some of his thoughts on transformation in both a private and public manner. This experience was further enhanced for me by our Wednesday meetings, when we met with a variety of individuals to reflect and exchange views on transformation or the lack thereof at the University.

In reflecting on the legacy left by Chris Brink at Stellenbosch University, one perhaps has to begin by reflecting on the man himself, being a person who believed that one must start by knowing where you come from, where you are now and where you are heading to. It was commonly acknowledged, although sometimes grudgingly, by members of the University community that he was a strong leader who had a clear vision that was framed within a context of transformation. He was a noted scholar, recognised by his colleagues as an excellent strategist, and had experience of tertiary institutions locally and abroad. Furthermore, he seemed to have an emotional connection to the phenomenon of transformation that transcended the mere intellectual understanding of it.

Chris Brink took over the leadership of the University at a time when there was great interest from government and other role players in the tertiary education sector in informally monitoring the ability of Stellenbosch to transform from an institution aligned with the apartheid government and viewed as the intellectual and cultural home of the Afrikaner people into one that was expected to become significantly more inclusive and reflective of the demographic profile of the country. In this way Stellenbosch became a powerful symbol in the new democracy to demonstrate the willingness of White people to engage with nation-building activities in South Africa and embrace the new government.

On the other hand, he was confronted with the traditional constituency of the University, which expected him to help protect the institution from national imperatives that would change the inherent basic nature and culture of the institution. His failure to make the latter group feel safe often resulted in bitter and sometimes ugly attacks on him via Afrikaans newspapers such as *Die Burger* and *Rapport*. What I found striking, however, was that, even though he was loyal to the University, he was also daring enough to take steps that sometimes did not seem to reflect that loyalty. I believe that it was because of his confidence in the institution and in the country that he was able to lay the foundation for change.

It is against this backdrop that I would like to touch on the transformation activities initiated by Brink during the period 2002-2007. These issues include the position of women, the profile of students and staff, the institutional culture, the management of diversity, his interaction with the community, and the language issue.

It is my belief that Brink improved the condition of women at Stellenbosch. He corrected a situation where women were ignored as candidates for appointment at senior management level, and he implemented a decision on corrective action for women at all levels who were being paid significantly less than their male counterparts and working on renewable contracts. By the time he left, I observed more women at Senate and at senior management level, although the rector's management team did not have adequate gender representation. He increased gender representation by having first myself and later an additional woman in supportive roles on the team.

It was under his leadership that I was appointed as the first woman Dean of Students, and I and Prof. E. Mouton were appointed in fairly non-traditional roles as Academic Deans of the Faculty of Military Science and the Faculty of Theology, respectively. His appointment of me and the Coordinator of Diversity also led to two black women being appointed to senior positions at a University where this practice was not customary. I don't think he fully understood the pressures under which both women functioned, but supported us as much as possible. He was sensitive to the needs of working mothers and supported the initiative of the Women's Forum to establish a day-care centre for children at the institution.

Chris Brink went beyond the notion of seeing diversity purely in terms of the construction of social identities such as race, religion, sexual preference and social class, to name a few. Instead he strongly embraced the notion of intellectual diversity and believed that the diversity of ideas is a powerful vehicle to develop mind shifts in people. Nevertheless, he recognised that national imperatives dictated the need to change the demographics of staff and students at the University.

It is perhaps one of the failures of his term of office that he did not succeed in significantly changing the demographics of the University, especially at staff level. In my opinion he would have made greater strides if he had stuck to his original motto to the effect that "the budget drives the change". I believe that the attempts to make the University more cost efficient negatively influenced the pace of transformation, especially its failure to offer more scholarships to black students and a cautiousness about offering more competitive packages to black staff members who were in great demand.

In my opinion, his framing of diversity within the context of Afrikaans also worked against the institution's ability to attract students and staff from other groups for whom Afrikaans was not the mother-tongue language. To his credit he recognised the importance of the contract with the Department of Defence that led to the Faculty of Military Science at the Military Academy, Saldanha, the increase in postgraduate students from designated groups, and special programmes such as HIV/AIDS in the Workplace as powerful mechanisms to increase the profile of other groups at the university. He was very supportive of such initiatives. The Mellon Scholarship for Talented Black Students was another such initiative through which he tried to attract and retain especially Black postgraduate students at Stellenbosch.

Given that the institutional culture at Stellenbosch University is strongly male and oriented towards Afrikaner culture, Brink understood that the institutional culture did not provide an inclusive working and learning environment for other cultural groups. He believed strongly in the renewal of student culture, especially at the level of traditions and practices in the residences, and promoted a value-

driven rather than a rule-driven approach to leadership development at student level. I find it unfortunate, though, that some of the drivers of these processes were themselves still locked into the very cultures they were expected to transform.

But he gave me his full support in my attempt to increase diversity at the student residences. He used the new residence as an opportunity to create an alternative model of residence life at Stellenbosch in an attempt to influence the institutional culture. Brink initiated and supported innovative projects, for example the Transformation Student Leaders Tour to the United States of America to cultivate agents of change among students, the Vice-Chancellor's Medal for Succeeding Against the Odds for talented black students to set up role models and debunk the myth that diversity leads to a lowering of standards. All these initiatives were aimed at changing the institutional culture. Brink strongly believed that students had the right to protest and gave the support where he felt this was necessary. As part of changing the institutional culture he promoted the idea that debate within the university context is sound and gives it a dynamic quality.

There were not adequate facilities to promote staff interaction and to his credit Brink sacrificed his own entertainment facility (the Blue Room) to create more spaces for staff to meet. This increased the opportunity for staff to interact across cultures. I also believe that Brink succeeded in bringing about a culture in which marginalised constituencies gradually felt safer in making their voices heard, and this turned the institution into a place where debate and protest were encouraged. He was not hesitant to openly show his support for the needs of different religious groups, e.g. the Muslim students, or to promote the rights of people with a different sexual orientation.

One of my deepest points of admiration for Chris Brink was his recognition of the hurt in the hearts of the various Black communities of Stellenbosch who were forced out of their original homes on properties where impressive Stellenbosch University buildings were eventually constructed, and more importantly the hurt around the loss of the Luckhoff High School for the coloured communities of Cloetesville and Ida's Valley. What struck me was his patience in allowing the community to come up with their own solution as to how that hurt could be recognised. The launch of the book *In ons Bloed*, a documentation of oral history in the language of the people involved, was one of the most dignified and emotional moments I experienced at the University of Stellenbosch, and demonstrated Brink's commitment to these people, regardless of their social status. In this way he also showed the broader relationship between the University and the community. This was just one of the steps he took to establish the concept of Stellenbosch as a university town and to change the dynamic within the town itself. I am not surprised that it was particularly the black community that expressed its disappointment at Brink's resignation.

The language issue unleashed a debate that Chris Brink was not going to win. It interfered a great deal with his ability to move the institution forward. He was, however, bold enough to resist pressure groups who wanted to force the institution into making Stellenbosch the place whose responsibility it was to protect Afrikaans for ideological reasons. Instead, he believed that the University rather had a role to develop the language for scientific purposes. He was acutely aware of how the language policy was negatively influencing the success rate of non-Afrikaans-speaking students and how it obstructed

our ability to recruit top academics and international students at the undergraduate level. In my view this had a negative influence of the aim of promoting a greater diversity of ideas.

The final victory for Chris Brink was the historic appointment of the first black Rector and Vice-Chancellor at Stellenbosch University, as well as two black academic Deans. By recognising that transformation was not just about variables such as race and gender, but also about systemic change to processes and structures, such victories became possible. But a long road of transformation still lies ahead for the University. But I believe that the seeds he planted will bear fruit. I wish he had played a greater role at national level, but I pay tribute to him for his contribution and the powerful way in which he influenced my life and those of many other marginalised people in Stellenbosch. I also pay tribute to the white, coloured and black members of the University community who decided to be agents of change along with Chris Brink. History will acknowledge your contributions in helping the University to move towards becoming truly inclusive.

## BOLD VISIONARY STRATEGIST

**TOBIE DE CONING**, *Senior Director: Strategic Initiatives, SU*

Strategic management is essentially geared towards taking decisions and launching actions that have as their goal the future success of the organisation concerned. It is undertaken in a contemporary and rapidly changing environment – an environment in which the only given is that it will probably be characterised by discontinuous change – taking into account and accepting significant risks.

The nature and intensity of these environmental realities confront the successful strategic with exceptional challenges. These include the ability to:

- Articulate and communicate a clear vision for the organisation;
- Identify the environmental forces (or driving forces) of the environment within which the sustained success of the organisation must be ensured, and to interpret and regulate their impact on the organisation;
- Develop a valid and profound systemic insight into the organisation concerned and have a thorough understanding of the dynamic interaction between all the respective subsystems;
- Maintain a good balance between the need for sufficient analysis and decisive, timely, strategic decision making;
- Be bold enough to take strategic decisions that would not necessarily be the preferred decision of all key stakeholders;
- Remain focused on the strategic course adopted when elements of the subsystems attempt to reverse unpopular strategic decisions;
- Question boldly and directly, where necessary, the deep-seated paradigms that may perhaps be regarded as inviolable in the organisation concerned, and to declare hackneyed recipes for success invalid;
- Deal with the organisation strategically at all times as a system and not to focus on addressing symptoms, but rather on dealing appropriately with the key factors that produce both strategic opportunities and dangers.

A retrospective analysis of Chris Brink as the chief strategist of the University shows very clearly that he may be regarded as a good example of an effective strategic manager. His arrival at the University in many respects meant the end of action within the strategic paradigm that had prevailed up to that time.

The only internal basis that he used as his strategic point of departure was the University's already established *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond*, with which – it quickly became evident – he was thoroughly acquainted. The fact that he consistently communicated with the various stakeholders by using the Strategic Framework as his point of departure was thus a pur-

poseful form of strategic communication, which gave those involved a stable platform upon which to engage in strategic discussions with the "new" Rector, and which he could use to communicate his own views to them.

The first few months of his term of office were spent mainly in acquiring a very systematic insight into the University as a system – an essential requirement for any true strategist, because without this it is impossible to "get a grip" on the organisation. Brink thus saw to it that he had a clear understanding of the realities of the complex organisation for which he had to provide strategic and visionary leadership. This thorough understanding and insight later produced clear dividends when strategic interventions had to be made within the University.

Strategic management in conditions of uncertainty also requires – as does any form of sound management – that results must be obtained through the empowerment of leaders on various levels of the organisation. This is in fact another feature of Brink's strategic management: the care with which he put together his executive management team and the constant attention devoted to establishing strategic leadership on various levels and in different dimensions of the University. These processes and their outcomes were not necessarily always greeted with the same degree of enthusiasm in all environments, probably because they entailed balancing corporate management principles, on the one hand, and collegial management, on the other.

Brink regarded the above process – establishing strategic leadership – as one of the prerequisites to take the University to the next level of strategic management. The fact that he pursued this effectively and, at the same time, initiated and implemented an extensive (and thus in certain cases unwelcome) restructuring process is an indication of his strategic sense and understanding of the need for essential enablers to make the University "fit" for the strategic challenges that had to be confronted.

Bold strategist? Most decidedly. Prepared to take unpopular strategic decisions because he regarded them, after careful consideration, as in the University's best interests? Most definitely. The necessary courage to challenge the University's deeply rooted paradigms and not shy away from sensitive and controversial issues? Without any doubt. For some perhaps excessively so!

There has been, and still is, criticism of Brink as a strategist. Such criticism most often took the form: "I agree with what he is doing, but I don't necessarily agree with the way he is doing it". The criticism of him is thus in the first instance not necessarily aimed at his understanding of the University's complex strategic context, or at the strategic decisions that were taken. It was also not primarily aimed at the content of the strategic processes that were followed (and are still continuing). Its focus was mainly the extent to which, in the critic's view, there had been sufficient communication with all interested parties at the time that possible strategic decisions were being considered, as well as during the implementation stages that followed. The criticism was thus mainly of the degree to which especially staff had been able to take co-ownership of the strategic change.

Whether this can be regarded as valid criticism is, of course, an open question. The fact of the matter is that, in an environment such as that of the University, with its multiple built-in decision-making cycles, Brink consistently managed to obtain sufficient formal support for the strategic decisions and



actions that were launched, and to internalise a sustained culture of change in a significant part of the University community.

The question is whether this should not be regarded as a characteristic of a successful strategist in an extremely complex environment.

It probably should.

# CHRIS BRINK AND STELLENBOSCH'S 'AFRIKAANS-NESS'

LEON DE STADLER, *Director: Language Centre, SU*

The memory of Chris Brink that I will carry with me for the rest of my life is bound up with the following moving incident. During one of the graduation ceremonies in December 2006 Russel Botman, Rector designate at that stage, led the proceedings in the awarding of degrees and diplomas. At a particular point he had to leave the stage to confer a degree on a white (this fact is important here) paralysed student waiting for him in a wheelchair in the hall below the stage. Russel, in the fine regalia of his office, descended the stairs quite solemnly and quietly along with our Registrar, Johann Aspeling, but when they reached the bottom of the stairs a black woman stood up (she was the mother of a student who would later receive a postgraduate qualification) and launched into a resounding song and dance of praise for the white student – like the rest of us, she was deeply affected by the success of a person who had to study under difficult circumstances.

Imagine the scene: the first *brown* Rector of Stellenbosch University of confers a degree on a *white* disabled student in a wheelchair, while a *black* mother praises the student by singing and dancing in front of the whole gathering. Needless to say, I was deeply moved!

I was so sorry that Chris was not there to see this incident, because this ostensibly insignificant event was symbolic of precisely what he wanted to achieve at Stellenbosch: a University where we could – in our "Afrikaans-ness" – create a space where cultures and languages could come together in even the most surprising ways. This little anecdote, in other words, is a strong symbol of the particular direction in which he steered the University, a direction which made Stellenbosch a more open and friendly place. And for this I will always honour him.

Naturally Chris was also synonymous with the development of the language policy at Stellenbosch. It was my privilege to be convenor of the Language Task Group in both rounds of the revision of the language policy – the one in 2001/2002 and the current one. As such, I worked closely with him and had the opportunity to get to know well his view of the language situation at the University. And as we all know, he was by no means an uncontroversial figure in this story, especially because he had a quite specific view of the Afrikaans nature of the University, a view that I and many others shared with him, but one which left some people feeling less comfortable.

It is actually not so difficult to sum up this view. The question was never whether Stellenbosch University should also be a space for Afrikaans speakers. In that respect his view was clear from day one: the University's vision statement declares that the University promotes "Afrikaans as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context". He never meddled with this notion and his view from the beginning was that there must always be a place for Afrikaans at the University of Stellenbosch and that the University must remain the preferred choice for Afrikaans students.

The question that we naturally had to answer was what kind of university we wanted to be. There were a few aspects of the Language Policy that quickly became clear under Brink's management. In the first place, the

University exists for the sake of scientific endeavour, with language as one of its many instruments; it does not exist in the first place for the sake of a language – in this case Afrikaans. A university cannot function as an institution with language as a reason for its existence. Furthermore, the University cannot afford an *exclusively* Afrikaans policy; we are striving for a healthy diversity of people and ideas, and such a policy would simply not allow this. And we also do not want this. And, finally, most of us felt strongly that Afrikaans can survive only within a multilingual context, and that the ideal profile of a Stellenbosch student must include their ability to speak more than one language in a multilingual South Africa.

Eventually, under Chris Brink's guidance, we came up with a policy that wanted to give Afrikaans precisely this position and role – a policy that created space for the systematic utilisation of Afrikaans as the default language in a majority of programmes (especially undergraduate), but also for the use of English as an important world language in a context within which we had to make sensible use of conceptual instruments such as bilingualism, multilingualism and parallel-medium teaching. Naturally everything did not always work out as well as we had hoped, but under Chris's guidance we at least realised that, as a University, we had to keep reflecting, as responsibly as possible, on one of the most complicated issues, namely how to deal with a multicultural educational environment.

And naturally Chris sometimes dealt with matters in controversial ways, ways that I did not always agree with. One of the greatest points of difference between us was perhaps precisely the way in which he tried to resolve disputes between different parties. By thinking in terms of opposites ("You can walk north and east, or north and west. But you cannot walk north and south"), he set up positions against one another and then made people choose, while I believed that the matter was sometimes more subtle and nuanced. One of his more controversial steps, and one that I advised against, was the vote in the Senate on the Convocation's position (including, among other things, the strict obligation on students and lecturers to learn Afrikaans). Although the Senate voted overwhelmingly against particular positions of Convocation, this step nevertheless led to a lot of unhappiness, especially among alumni and the wider Afrikaans community. In my view, this was also one of Brink's actions that ultimately raised the temperature of the prevailing language debate sharply, and not necessarily in a way that benefited the discussion on language.

But perhaps it is ultimately precisely this that I will remember, and however contradictory it might seem, it was perhaps also an advantage of his way of working that he was prepared to debate particular issues, that he would then weigh up points of view against one another in his almost painfully logical manner, and then fearlessly take a decision and carry it through if he believed it was in the best interests of the University. And naturally he then helped the rest of us to clarify our thoughts, even if it was sometimes just to disagree with him.

That Chris wanted to serve the interests of Afrikaans in his own particular way – about that I do not have a moment's doubt. In any event, there are a sufficient number of public statements from him on this topic on record. That he wanted in this way also to make the University a more open and friendly place that could face a future of excellence, diversity and social involvement with confidence is also clear and well established.

But ultimately this one image remains indelible in my mind: the black mother dancing and singing in praise of a successful white disabled student. This, in the final analysis, is what Chris represents for me and the way I shall remember him.

# ACCOMPLISHING A BALANCING ACT:

## Afrikaans in multilingual context at Stellenbosch University

**MARIANNA VISSER**, *Vice-Dean: Faculty of Arts, SU*

The rapidly changing landscape of higher education was thoroughly taken into account in Stellenbosch University's *Strategic Framework for the turn of the Century and Beyond* (March 2000). This document expresses the University's commitment to a vision in which excellence in teaching and research are given priority. At the same time the University also makes an explicit commitment to making available its capacity, expertise and resources to the wider South African society.

This particular commitment brought to the fore the strategic objective of broadening the diversity of the University's student body and staff complement as a priority. Since the publication of the Strategic Framework, this commitment to the promotion of diversity has prompted a dynamic debate on the extent to which this can be reconciled with another explicit commitment in this document, namely that the University should be "language friendly", with Afrikaans as point of departure. The debate thus addressed the issue of the inherent reconcilability of the University's policy on diversity, accessibility and language – vaguely described as being "language friendly" – and greater accessibility for the general South African population.

Prof. Brink often said in speeches to University staff, students, alumni and the general public that, in his management functions, he was simply giving effect to the University's Strategic Framework as it had been compiled even before his appointment. To address the issue of the medium of instruction, specifically with reference to Afrikaans and English, and the way that this is related to the promotion of diversity with respect to the racial composition of students and staff, Prof. Brink established a Language Task Team in 2001 that was representative of the academic staff from all the Faculties, as well as staff from the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and from the Language Centre. This Language Task Team compiled, for the first time, a language policy for the University that specified in detail the ways in which Afrikaans and/or English were to be used in teaching modules.

Four options were designed and defined with respect to, among other things, the language for class notes, language in students' assignments and examinations, and the oral use of language during lectures. The new Language Policy, which took effect from 2004, thus described with meticulous care the use of Afrikaans and English in teaching, in contrast to the simple single concept of "language friendliness", which led to increasing uncertainty because of its vagueness. Four "options" for language usage were specified, namely the A option, in which Afrikaans was the predominant mode of communication of the lecturer, the E option (mainly for postgraduate study), in which English was the predominant language of oral communication of the lecturer, the A and E option, in which separate classes are presented in parallel streams entirely in English or in Afrikaans, and the T option (bilingual option), in which the lecturer uses more or less the same amount of Afrikaans and English in his/her communication with students in a lecture and/or a module.

The T option represented a considerable change in the organisation of medium of instruction, and had a broadening of access to the University of especially students of colour with English as their dominant academic language and a lower level of proficiency in Afrikaans as its key motivation. The Language Committee's introduction of the T option into the University's Language Policy was done in accordance with a scientific point of departure for the sustained promotion and protection of Afrikaans as academic language and its continued, sustained and vital use by lecturers and students.

The inclusion of the T option was aimed, on the one hand, at making teaching in the Faculty concerned more accessible to students of colour whose home language was not Afrikaans, in the spirit of the University's point of departure in its admissions policy, "Access with Success". On the other hand, the T option proceeded from the scientific basis that these students' language development in Afrikaans would best occur through a significant degree of exposure to the subject language in Afrikaans. Similarly, the underlying rationale was that exposing students with Afrikaans as their first language to the subject language in English in modules using the T option would help to promote their mastery and proficiency in the language of the subject in English. This would thus help to support Afrikaans students, seeing that prescribed books and the literature on the subject are largely English.

The underlying balance in the use of Afrikaans and English in the modules using the T option is emphasised by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in particular, and this option was introduced after 2004 also at second- and third-year level of BA. This extension of the T option was questioned by individuals and groups among alumni and the broader public, and once again placed the University in the media spotlight regarding the highly topical issue of the protection of Afrikaans as academic language.

This questioning of the impact of the T option with respect to guaranteeing the promotion and protection of Afrikaans as sustainable academic language was to a large extent linked to the person of Prof. Chris Brink as Rector of the University. In 2005-2006 the language debate led to open mistrust and hostility from certain individuals and groups of alumni directed against Prof. Brink, especially in the wide media coverage on the debate on the T option, in other words, regarding the scope of the use of English alongside Afrikaans in the oral communication of lecturers in the classroom.

In his book *No lesser place: The taaldebat at Stellenbosch* (AFRICAN SUN MeDIA Publishers), which appeared in 2006, Prof. Brink provided an analytical reflection on the opposing views of the supporters and opponents of the T option as formulated with regard to the use of Afrikaans in a multicultural context at the University. In this book Prof. Brink set out clearly his vision for the sustainable use and promotion of Afrikaans as academic language at the University, along with his vision of the importance of promoting diversity in the student body and the staff complement, and the accessibility of the University to the general South African population. In this vision Prof. Brink gives a clear expression of the balanced approach he wants to achieve in terms of the protection of Afrikaans as an academic language, on the one hand, and the priority of successful access for students who represent the general South African population, on the other.

Faculties that use the T option in their teaching modules have established the importance of this approach and its successful contribution to successful studies – not only for students with Afrikaans as first language, but also for students with English as dominant academic language, in particular non-Afrikaans-speaking students of colour. The balanced approach implemented in these Faculties will be continued in the purposeful planning of the increasingly successful implementation of dual-language teaching, in which the position of Afrikaans as academic language is safeguarded.

Prof. Chris Brink's vision and conviction regarding the initiation, and then the sustained and successful implementation, of the balanced approach for the protection of Afrikaans as academic language, on the one hand, and the promotion of accessibility and diversity, on the other, are among the central aspects of his lasting contribution to the University.

# ADVOCATE OF CRITICAL, INDIVIDUAL THINKING

**MARIKE GROENEWALD**, *Students' Representative Council Deputy Chair  
2003-2004, SU*

## Introduction

I first became acquainted with Prof. Chris Brink shortly after I was elected Deputy Chair of the University's Students' Representative Council (SRC) in August 2003. Given the leadership structures of the University, there is unfortunately little time to get to know one another properly as individuals before the baggage of positions, motives and political agendas is imposed on the relationship. Consequently, from the very beginning this was a very interesting relationship within the context of the two collaborative leadership structures. Although matters appeared to be calm and friendly on the surface between Prof. Brink as leader of the Management team and Michael Cass as Chair of the Student Council, the interaction between these two individuals and the respective groups was considerably more complex.

The first noteworthy feature of the relationship was the apparent lack of confidence in one another. My impression was that there were individuals in both groups who doubted, as a matter of principle, the motives and principles of the other group. Prof. Brink handled this situation well. It was almost as if it secretly amused him. His views were always carefully considered, and his arguments logical and well thought through. It was clear that he was working according to a plan and he preferred to approach emotional issues with mathematical precision.

## A Student Dean on Management

One clear difference of opinion was the SRC's desire to see a Student Dean on the University Management team. Prof. Brink's view was that the Vice-Rector: Teaching was already representing students interests there and that it was thus unnecessary to have a Student Dean as additional representative within the line function. This difference of opinion had a great impact and ended in a "communication strike" between Management and the SC.

In retrospect, I think that Management was also striving for greater student representation, and that if more trouble had been taken from the beginning to build up personal relationships of trust and understanding, the whole matter could have been dealt with differently. The outcome was one that left both parties satisfied, but the route towards it was in fact not ideal, and the unhappiness and unpleasantness could have been avoided.

### **The Slabbert Commission and the Botman working group**

In response to the Slabbert Report, Prof. Brink created a working group to drive the process of culture change on the campus. This group functioned under Prof. Botman, the Vice-Rector: Teaching.

Within the context of this working group, the discussions held, and the long and difficult process then underway, it became clear that a new Matie identity was necessary. This emerged not only from leadership circles, but also from the general student body.

### **Matie Week**

On the basis of this critical reflection and the need that arose to establish a broader identity and culture, I launched a new campus project during my term of office: a project that attempted to establish a new Matie identity – one with which all students could feel comfortable and at home, in which individualism and critical thinking, discussion and debate were encouraged. This was the beginning of Matie Week, a week-long celebration of a new identity.

During this week the SRC, working in collaboration with other campus organisations, presented a series of projects and opportunities for all Maties who strove to achieve the above-mentioned goal. Maties were especially encouraged to think beyond the context of their immediate environments (residence, private students' ward, organisation and/or society) and to participate in the projects.

### **Some thoughts on Prof. Brink's leadership**

Prof. Brink's leadership style did not necessarily encourage the building of relationships at an advanced level, but it did teach student leaders to argue in a structured and logical way, and to keep track of where their arguments and demands fitted into the wider scheme of decision making.

He was a model of a leader who did not set much store on popularity, but rather worked hard to achieve the wider goals of the University. This was a mode of working that was not always understood by everyone, but it was necessary.

Under his leadership a very important way of thinking began to gain ground: that of individual, critical thinking. In my view Prof. Brink never strove to undermine the common Matie culture – he rather wanted to encourage students to think critically about their environment and to help them develop a sense of their own worth. And it is so important that students develop this skill. It is precisely the abilities to maintain perspective, to look at matters objectively, and to be able to debate critically on issues that he wanted to cultivate among Maties.

### **Conclusion**

Here in the heart of the Winelands we perhaps adopt the methods of the wine-making process when we embark on propagating new ideas and implementing changes. This is the old pioneering method of pressing and filtering and purifying.



Perhaps it is in fact *necessary* to work together to put thoughts, ideas, feelings, relations, traditions and identity through a "wine-pressing" process. Without doing so, it may be impossible to reach a point of comfort, safety and solidarity.

To one thing I can testify: Prof. Brink was always there. Even after the most difficult days we could return, meet and try again. He never stopped thinking, never stopped looking for solutions. He was always there. And as a result the metaphorical road to Stellenbosch is well tarred, well trodden, and in the future there are still going to be many Maties, in all their glorious diversity, who are going to choose to walk this Stellenbosch road.

## CO-OPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP EMPOWER STUDENTS

**KOBUS EHLERS**, *Students' Representative Council Chair 2007, SU*

At the end of any Rector's term of office the key question is surely what progress had been made under the leadership of the person concerned. Yet it is difficult to pinpoint precisely what an enormous impact a Rector has on an institution as old and established as our University.

What is clear, however, is that progress was certainly made during Prof. Brink's term of office. Stellenbosch University finally developed a very clear profile of precisely what kind of university we wish to be. It became evident through a number of "shape and size" exercises that this University could be labelled as a "medium-size, broad-based, research-intensive university".

During Prof. Brink's term of office we saw extensive development of our scientific institutional indicators, and there was unprecedented access to management information. Few universities would stand comparison with us. A premium was also placed on the development of our role as an influential scientific institution and the cultivation of a first-class academic atmosphere and orientation.

Under his guidance we progressed quite a way towards operationalising the Strategic Framework by way of an easily understood five-point vision statement. An attempt was made to reflect this vision, along with a number of core values, in all the University's different activities. Furthermore, this vision statement was finalised through a process of seeking consensus and agreement.

Yet Prof. Brink's greatest challenge was certainly the change (*transformation*, if you must) that Stellenbosch University had to initiate in order to become a fully-fledged member of the South African education landscape. Although this task has by no means been completed yet, one must pay tribute to this Rector's contribution towards our moving closer to becoming a multicultural institution. In his own words, he had to "turn the ship around". And if one is talking about a colossus such as this University, then doing so was never going to be an easy task.

Prof. Chris Brink's transformation initiatives certainly did not stop with simple demographic rightsizing, but also addressed the institutional culture and values of the University. These programmes also had a dramatic effect at student level.

The changes, especially at the level of student and residence culture, were not always received in a friendly spirit and many students protested strongly (especially at the beginning) against Prof. Brink's initiatives and style. But significant progress was made in the field and the student landscape in 2007 is hardly comparable with the state of affairs when he arrived.

Students played an important and decisive role in his leadership style. Under his leadership students gained access to several new levels of decision making and we had a say in a number of important

issues. But proposals from students were dealt with like any others, and were taken seriously if they were carefully thought through, logical and systematically presented.

Naturally the relationship between the Students' Representative Council and various Rectors differed in their respective terms of office. There were years when the interaction between them was characterised by tensions and difficulties. Over the years, however, students (and the Students' Representative Council) began to understand the demands that this Rector was making on us. Furthermore, I also believe that the Rector developed a more sensitive sense of the culture and institutions at the University. His focus was consistently on the best interests of the institution as a whole, while students sometimes had a more local focus. These points of departure sometimes came into conflict, but it was always reassuring to know that we all had the best interests of the University at heart, regardless of our divergent views on how these interests could best be served.

The last part of his term of office, during which I was involved in the Students' Representative Council, was undoubtedly characterised by a spirit of co-operation and partnership. This orientation was an essential element in making participatory management and fair representation of students a reality.

Stellenbosch University can regard itself as fortunate to have been under Prof. Chris Brink's leadership at this particular time. During a period of great uncertainty and far-reaching changes, he was able to carry out the unenviable task of managing transformation at this University. We thank him for his vision, dedication and courage.

## RECEPTIVE, INCLUSIVE – A MAN WITH A HEART

**PHUMZILE MALAMBILE**, *Former Primarius of Goldfields, former Chair of the Black Students Association and current Assistant Warden of Metanoia Residence*

My arrival at Stellenbosch University in the year 2000 was characterised by the typical perceptions and uncertainties that were to be expected in one coming into a strange environment, dictated by the history of that time. Not a lot had changed then and there were many concerns and challenges faced especially by black students on campus. There wasn't much debate about transformation, and where a little took place, it was met with great apathy and any related ideas with much resistance from the powers that be.

Under these circumstances the arrival of Prof. Chris Brink as the new Rector came as a breath of fresh air; expectations of a more receptive and inclusive management approach developed especially among black students.

As opposed to the preceding regimes, Prof. Brink's tenure, from the point of view of black student leadership, of which I was part, ushered in a culture of engagement and open debate. As the leadership of the Black Students Association, we enjoyed a relationship with the Rector in which we could discuss our interests, and even though we could not always agree on everything, we could still openly express ourselves and address issues in good faith.

Very articulate in conveying his opinions and ideas, yet just as cautious in his choice of words, it was at times obvious that he would not give answers or solutions to some questions, but rather preferred the answers to come from those who asked the questions. One could interpret this either as wisdom in that it encouraged people to realize that solutions to all problems lie within us, or as a way of avoiding responsibility. Either way, his alertness of mind and negotiation skills were never in doubt.

Very intelligent, perceptive, and a very good listener and public speaker, he led numerous public forums where he would listen to the feelings and concerns of various University stakeholders. This was particularly impressive, because it hardly ever happened in the past, especially not on the scale at which Prof Brink did it, and certainly not with the degree of integrity that we as students perceived it to be.

In recognition of all these qualities as mentioned above, one is not implying that all was well with his leadership style and his handling of some situations. Among other things, the controversy around the language policy left many divided over what they perceived to be his actual position on the issue. Many would claim that his leadership was not clear on the matter, while others felt that he was leading the University in the wrong direction with regard to the language policy.

Regardless of any of these sentiments, his assertion that the University's primary purpose was the accumulation of knowledge for the benefit of society was something that our constituency as the BSA applauded. We also agreed that this need not take place through the suppression of Afrikaans or any

other language for that matter, but through Afrikaans in a multilingual context. Perhaps it was the definition and/or interpretation of the "multilingual context" that brought about much controversy and anxiety.

On a lighter and perhaps more acceptable note to some, his embracing of diversity and transformation as well as his recognition of the triumph of the human spirit through the various awards and scholarships that he introduced, bear testimony to his most outstanding attribute, his humanitarian nature.

His dedication as a family man, and in particular a father, shone through in his recognition of, and advocacy for, the need to compensate effort and hard work. He acknowledged every student's need to feel welcome and catered for in all necessary aspects of university life, almost the same way as he probably would for his own children.

From the point of view of a student leader, and a student myself during Prof. Brink's tenure as Rector of Stellenbosch University, we appreciate his efforts in pointing the University in a direction that, under different circumstances and with fewer sacrifices than he has made, would have taken longer to initiate.

We are also not oblivious to the fact that more could still have been achieved, but we also take cognisance of the challenges that he was faced with in the process of initiating change, however minimal. We also hope that his wisdom has found its way into our reservoirs of knowledge, and that his perceived mistakes will be a source of much positive learning rather than of destruction in future.

We wish him all the best in his new path, and we thank him for the time he spent with us.

## PROF. BRINK – STRIKING PROOF OF THE HOPE WE CAN LIVE WITH IN OUR COUNTRY

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**ELIZE JULIUS**, *Theology student and first recipient of Vice-Chancellor's Award for Succeeding Against the Odds*

I believe that nothing happens by accident – such as the fact that it happens to be today, Wednesday 11 April 2007, when I must set down a few words about Prof. Chris Brink. The coincidence is that I am doing so on the same day as Prof. Brink's successor, Prof. Russel Botman, is being inaugurated as the new Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch.

'Dynamic' and 'diversity'. These are the two words that occur to me when I think of Prof. Chris Brink. I can't help smiling when I think of the many reports in *Die Matie* and *Die Burger* – and surely also every other newspaper in the country and even abroad – written about Prof. Brink and diversity. You could hardly think about the one without also thinking about the other. The determination with which Prof. Brink wanted to introduce greater diversity at Stellenbosch University was such that diversity became a swearword on the campus. To say that Prof. Brink was not very popular on the campus at that stage would be putting it mildly. But today everyone on the campus and in Stellenbosch is an expert on the issue of diversity.

Images that occur to me when I think of Prof. Brink include my favourite cartoon in *Die Matie* – simple and none too grand, but it impressed me precisely because stewardship is a key subject for me. “*The grass is always greener on THIS side of Merriman Street.*” Be that as it may – I remember how transformation on the campus then also included the physical appearance of our University. I remember specifically the changes in and around the Humanities and Social Sciences Building on the corner of this very same Merriman and Ryneveld Streets. The new fence, the large pot-plant holders with trees, and the computers and the mat in Humarga. The changes were conspicuous; radical. One could not miss them. I could not help but feel proud that I too was a Matie.

Prof. Brink had just been appointed when I registered as a student at the University a bit more than five years ago. I first met the Rector in my second year on campus. The invitation came by telephone. I think I was excited – must have been – what a privilege for a second-year student to meet the *Rector* of the University. I remember how Prof. Brink put out a hand to greet me. I remember how cordially I was received; the slight smile around his mouth that immediately put me at ease. I remember how he showed me to a chair at the round table in his office and how we went to sit at the table. These are not gestures that I accepted as matter of fact, because they were not. They were exceptional – like the person I met that day.

I don't remember much about our conversation that day, but what I do remember is Prof. Brink's invitation to share my story with him. His genuine interest made a lasting impression on me. I was as excited as a child and when I mentioned that I had my family photos with me in my bag, he said spontaneously, "Well, let me have a look at them." I remember how patiently he listened and how, after all the stories, he again held out his hand to me to wish me luck with my bursary. I was baffled and thought to myself, 'He could just as well have dealt with the formalities at the beginning of the meeting'. Yet the Rector chose first to meet me and hear my story. I was not too insignificant to sit with him in his office and he was not too important to take the time to listen to my stories. This is how I got to know Prof. Brink. Someone to whom others matter as *people*. Someone for whom it does not matter where you came from, but for whom where you are going to is of vital significance. Someone who uses the means at his disposal unashamedly to open doors for others – especially to those who might not otherwise have had the opportunity.

I think I was in Prof. Brink's office for a maximum of thirty minutes, but afterwards my life would never be the same again. The meeting with Prof. Brink also increased my faith – in the first place, because being there in the office confirmed once more the Lord's plan for my being here on the campus. In the second place, the fact that my path should cross with someone like Prof. Brink's serves as a challenge for my daily life as well as for my future – to show the same mercy towards others that I have experienced through the life of Prof. Chris Brink. I see in the life and service of Prof. Brink the traces of the watchword and striving of one of the world's greatest leaders, Mohandas Gandhi, namely that I as a person should *become* the change that I want to see around me.

In my view, the process of change that Prof. Brink started at Stellenbosch was not simply a "new South African" politically correct gimmick, as many have claimed. My experience has rather been that of the heart and vision of someone who cherishes ideals of better circumstances and quality of life for other people and then gets to work to bring about those changes. Prof. Brink is striking proof of the hope with which we can live in our country. Someone who goes the extra mile for others. Someone who notices other people; who extends a helping hand especially to the weak, so that they too, but also others, may realise once more that they have been a part of the here-and-now, and for this very reason can make a valuable contribution towards the holism of the one universal society.

Once again, my thanks and appreciation to Prof. Brink. To those of you reading this, the challenge is to live your life in such a way that others too can live. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

## HE LEADS FROM THE FRONT AND CREATES OPPORTUNITIES

**WYNOMA MICHAELS**, *Former SRC Chair, Member of the executive committee of the Convocation, Resident Head: Huis ten Bosch, and Deputy Director: IMSTUS*

In the early 1990s many higher education institutions constituted Broad Transformation Forums (BTFs) as a means of addressing the challenges of higher education in a post-apartheid South Africa. However, the response of Stellenbosch University to the changing landscape of higher education was to assume a 'business as usual' approach. This decision had far-reaching implications for the institution, in that a culture of *indaba* was not fostered within the University community, while the University remained untransformed, with barely any evidence of diversification in its staff and student composition. This was the background against which Chris Brink arrived at Stellenbosch University.

Whispers within department and faculty corridors preceded Brink's arrival. Speculation abounded about whether this 'outsider' would maintain the *status quo* or bring about the transformation that the institution so desperately needed. Brink's destiny was virtually sealed before his arrival at Stellenbosch. Was he to be a 'saviour' or a 'traitor'?

Upon his arrival in Stellenbosch he appointed a coordinator of diversity, whose mandate it was to address issues relating to diversity at Stellenbosch University, which sent out a clear signal that change was to come. The short-term results that were achieved with this initiative included an increase in appointments from designated groups at Stellenbosch University, as well as the appointment of members from these designated groups into senior positions.

Brink later initiated a commission to investigate residence culture with the purpose of addressing initiation practices that were recurring within residences. The office of university accommodation, which was to focus on bringing about a renewal of residence culture, was born out of the recommendations of this commission. This initiative has proved to be a success, as paradigm shifts amongst student leaders are being achieved, particularly pertaining to the welcoming of first-year students to the University as opposed to the initiation methods of past.

These initiatives began to bring the transformation agenda at Stellenbosch University to the fore. At the same time they began to give a voice to young alumni from across a broad spectrum of backgrounds who had lost hope that Stellenbosch University would transform. The Brink era has undoubtedly contributed to the increasing involvement of young alumni in the debate on the future of Stellenbosch University; for too long these young alumni have felt disempowered.

Brink's willingness to engage in the contentious language debate is a reflection of his leadership style, which is indicative of his leading from the front. His participation in the debate stems from his belief



that the University cannot begin to address issues of transformation without seriously engaging with the role and place of Afrikaans within the institution. Though the language saga continues, Brink has achieved what few have managed in that he has reminded us that universities are institutions of learning rather than language centres.

His sometimes 'unpopular' stance on issues has inevitably meant that his term of office has not been without controversy and difficulty. However, the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy.<sup>1</sup> Brink's leadership has demonstrated that he is not afraid to grapple with the 'sacred cows' of this institution for the benefit of the greater cause, while at the same time challenging Stellenbosch University to move away from its sometimes *laager* mentality.

Brink has indeed done more for Stellenbosch University in terms of transformation than any of his predecessors. One of the great tragedies of life is that men seldom bridge the gulf between practice and profession, between doing and saying<sup>1</sup>. However, this cannot be said of the Brink era. While many will remember him for his stance in the language debate, I will remember him for his visionary leadership, his refusal to avoid the difficult issues and his determination to be a voice for the voiceless, but more importantly, because he has distinguished himself as a leader in the doing and the saying.

## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King Jr, 1963, *Power of Love*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 157 pages.

## PROPHETIC VOICE IN OUR MIDST

**NICO SMITH**, *Former minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and formerly at the Faculty of Theology, SU.*

The appointment of Chris Brink as Rector of the University of Stellenbosch was an unparalleled surprise for me, because in the past it had usually been so easy to predict who the next Rector would be. The "inner circles" of the Afrikaner establishment usually determined this in advance – it was necessary to ensure that the post would be filled by someone who would maintain the traditions of the University.

In my 16 years as lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch I got to know intimately the pressure to conform that was exerted by the Afrikaner establishment at the University. No matter how good one's intentions were in setting out on new paths, this impulse was nipped in the bud time and time again. Stellenbosch had a tradition of being an Afrikaner university, and this tradition had to be maintained at all costs. You thus conform, or you leave. If transformation had to take place, the changes had to be in line with the University's traditions, because they had top priority.

In the past it was particularly the Afrikaner Broederbond that played a leading role in this regard. And because I was aware of the influence of this organisation on University decisions – I was in fact a member of that organisation for ten years myself – I wondered how this "stranger" would fare in Afrikaner circles. I do not know whether Brink himself had ever been a member of the Broederbond<sup>1</sup>. If so, then he formed part of a very long tradition whereby the Rector of the University of Stellenbosch also had to be a member of the Broederbond. The Rectors of the past, after all, were without exception members. If Brink had not been a member of the Broederbond, then his appointment as Rector was indeed an extraordinary occurrence. Could that have been an indication that the Afrikaner establishment, as manifested in the Broederbond in the past, had lost its hold on universities?

It was not long before I was hearing less favourable comments on Brink's rectorship from Afrikaner circles. This immediately made it evident to me that Brink had not conformed. If Afrikaners feel "aggrieved" about someone, this can be for only one reason, namely that the person concerned had not adopted the customary language and actions of traditional Afrikaners. Indeed, those who did not give top priority to Afrikaners and their language could not be regarded as friends; on the contrary, they jeopardised the traditions which Afrikaners had established with such sacrifices. Therefore it was necessary to act with great vigilance against anyone in a leadership position who did not demonstrate a sensitivity to Afrikaner traditions.

Brink gave an excellent account of his struggle in this regard in his book *No Lesser Place: The taaldebate at Stellenbosch*. According to some, this book makes no particularly significant contribution towards Stellenbosch University's survival as an Afrikaans or Afrikaner university, but it certainly made a contribution to the debate on the survival of Afrikaners and their language in the country as a whole. In

the introduction to the book Brink makes the following point, which in my opinion expresses the core of what he was striving for, as well as of the intense battle waged against him:

I believe that if Stellenbosch does not become part of the mainstream of our new South Africanness, the Afrikaners – and perhaps the Afrikaans speakers – will not become part of the mainstream, which would impair the whole grand experiment of building a non-racial society in our country.

Here Brink confronts the University of Stellenbosch, as well as the whole of Afrikanerdom, with the choice of *either* giving their own interests (traditions, language and culture) top priority, or making a contribution towards building up an inclusive, non-racial South African society with a new future for everyone.

It is of particular significance that, 50 years before Brink's appeal for a common South Africanness, a similar call came from the Stellenbosch academic community. In 1955 Prof. B.B. Keet, at that time a lecturer at the Seminary at Stellenbosch, published his book *Suid-Afrika waarheen? (Whereto, South Africa?)*. This was only seven years after the National Party took over the government of the country and began implementing apartheid as its political policy. Keet demonstrated irrefutably that apartheid was a dead end, and pleaded with Afrikaners not to place their own interests above all else, but to work with the rest of the country's inhabitants for the greatest good for all.

This is the reason why I so greatly regret that 50 years later the University has once again chosen not to listen to the voice of a "prophet" in their midst. This means that not only Stellenbosch, but South African society as whole, will forgo the contribution that Brink can make. It is people of his calibre that our country needs so urgently to steer us through troubled waters. If Afrikaners are going to remain so short-sighted – and particularly so in academic circles – that they cannot or will not see what they can do for peace in this country, then they deserve to lose the priceless contribution that a man such as Chris Brink can make to the benefit of the country.

I realised from the very beginning that Brink's stay at Stellenbosch would not be a bed of roses. Yet the ways in which thorns were strewn in his way are not worthy of the Afrikaner academics concerned. Furthermore, this just confirmed a perception about Stellenbosch University among non-Afrikaners, namely that it is regarded as a "sacred hollow" where some Afrikaners are trying to sustain a homeland for themselves.

I am truly sorry, Chris, that the University, but especially South Africa, has forfeited your outstanding academic insights. I had so hoped that you would be – to resort to a currently popular idiom – the General de la Rey whom Afrikaners are so desperately calling for these days to liberate them from the prison of identity, language and culture. You could truly have been a General de la Rey for them.

## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Brink was never a member of the Broederbond. (Ed.)

## CHRIS BRINK, THE BRIDGE BUILDER

**PAT WILLIAMS**, *Headmaster, Luckhoff High School, Ida's Valley*

One of Chris Brink's most remarkable characteristics is the logical way in which he thinks. All role players who had dealings with him understood precisely what he said, what he wanted done, how it could be done and why it was necessary.

He gave many role players who had in the past not been involved in the University's affairs a hearing, and later also a voice. The book *In ons bloed* [*In our blood*] is a very good example of this.

But his greatest contribution, in my view, is the fact that now the University of Stellenbosch and the local community have forged good partnerships. It was his conviction that the Stellenbosch community was one community in which no one needed to be marginalised. His attendance at community activities meant that the town's inhabitants looked anew at the position of Rector at Stellenbosch University. The University's community interaction initiatives, which took a particular form under his leadership, swept through the whole town like a fresh breeze.

Vision 2012, which was formulated during his term of office, is a solid foundation for his successor to build on. His dedication to this vision is well known. But probably the most important aspect that emerged during his term of office was the realisation the Chief Executive Officer of the University is also just a human being – one person in the service of all people.

I wish him strength in his new position.

## WHAT IF...?

**SIMON ADAMS**, *Minister of the "Volkskerk van Afrika", Stellenbosch*

With the publication of *No Lesser Place: The taaldebat at Stellenbosch* Chris Brink sent a "What if ...?" question into the public domain. Well, if a top theoretician wants to supplement probability theory with a "What if..." addendum, who am I to question this? So, I'll hop onto the bandwagon with pleasure.

One of the "What if..." questions that will probably never be answered is the one about what would have happened – or could have been achieved – if the former Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University had completed his second term of office in 2011.

As a community activist, I could offer nothing but wholehearted support for Chris Brink in his aspirations, simply because his passion for the transformation of our divided past was so intense, and his involvement so bold and totally committed. I, like many others in the community, recognised – and acknowledged – him as a soul-mate.

His energy and drive are astounding. Apart from the fact that he began to implement a transformation agenda at the University at a steady pace, he still had enough energy to participate widely in community activities. His involvement in initiatives such as the Desmond Tutu HIV/Aids clinic in Kayamandi, the publication of the ground-breaking community history, *In ons bloed [In our blood]*, and the project of making the former Luckhoff High School available and accessible to the community once again are some of the monuments to his commitment. It is precisely his seriousness and concern about community affairs, as much as his down-to-earth simplicity, that are his CV and passport to the community, which will always welcome him with open arms.

Who would have thought that a lad from the Upington of the 1950s, a second lieutenant in the former SA Defence Force, could cause such a stir here at Stellenbosch in Afrikaans circles and even in the international community?

Transformation, Chris Brink says, is not for sissies. His own transformation in fact took place all over the world. No one graduates from a rural primary school to Cambridge University and then back to the Rand Afrikaans University for a second doctorate without experiencing diversity along a very wide spectrum. One could say that Chris Brink had done his homework in allowing the sheer variety of the world to influence him positively in his words and actions.

One of the beneficiaries of these experiences, this homework, was and is Stellenbosch – also the Stellenbosch that became known as the "maternity ward of apartheid". Thanks to Chris Brink *Reinventing Stellenbosch* is already on the town's future agenda, and there are a number of enthusiasts who will ensure that this re-invention won't simply be another wheel, and especially not a flat tyre.

Another beneficiary in the near future will be one of England's "science cities". But what if ... Newcastle begins to seem too chilly and the image of lush green oak trees beckons?

In the meantime I say: Farewell and *Aluta continua*, Chris. Newcastle and Simonsberg are, in more senses than one, just a phone call away from one another.

## LEADER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**NASIMA BADSHA**, *Former Deputy Director-General for Higher Education in the National Department of Education*

It has been a privilege and pleasure to have worked with Professor Chris Brink during his term as Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in my capacity as Deputy Director-General with responsibility for Higher Education in the Department of Education.

Professor Brink assumed the leadership of Stellenbosch University at a time when the higher education system was poised to respond to a number of major policy imperatives of the government, including the challenges of institutional restructuring.

The transformation challenges at the University required a leader with the ability to look forward to the possibilities and opportunities that would come from broadening both staff and student access to the University and, in so doing, challenge deeply-rooted practices and policies. It also required somebody who equally recognised the need to promote and value those traditions that the University's academic reputation is built on. Chris was willing to take on these challenges. In the process he no doubt found himself at the receiving end of criticisms from those who felt that the pace of transformation was too slow and from those who felt that the traditions of the University were being eroded. Chris handled these complex change-management challenges with integrity and always in ways that were informed by the interests of the academic project and, in particular, of the University of Stellenbosch.

Chris Brink's term of office also marked the fuller involvement of the University of Stellenbosch and its leadership in the broader national debates on higher education policy. Chris brought to this engagement his thorough understanding and appreciation of the role of higher education in society, and especially societies in transition.

I want to take this opportunity of wishing Prof. Brink well in his position as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle. I am confident that in his new capacity he will endeavour to build and strengthen partnerships with South African universities.

# THE WAY WE REMEMBER HIM – IN CONVERSATION WITH-AMANDA BOTHA...

## 1. Open conversation – SANEL BARNARDO

*(Faculty Manager: Agrisciences, Stellenbosch University)*

"I was closely involved with the appointment of Prof. Chris Brink as Rector and Vice-Chancellor. I represented the Association of Administrative Officers on the Appointments Committee and actively promoted his candidature.

"At that time (2001) there was a lot of politics on the campus, especially around the language issue. He was like a fresh breeze from the outside; he had a vision for the University and did outstandingly well in his job interview.

"The five years of his term of office were filled with controversy, especially in the media and also among the staff. I knew from the beginning that he would not stay long, but also knew at that time that he was the right appointment.

"He is a philosopher, very approachable and always ready for an open conversation. He could handle criticism and allowed people to differ from him.

"I also served in the Council and Senate with him. What particularly impressed me about Prof. Brink was his ability to listen intensely in a meeting of 250 people and then to give a precise summary of the key points under discussion, without being biased. I will always remember this gift of his.

"As personal assistant to Prof. Walter Claassen, I was part of the rectorate for five years and could get to know Prof. Brink on a personal level as well. He was aware of what was going on around him and had a genuine interest in others. He is the kind of person who would write a personal message to you in a Christmas card. I found him to be an appreciative and grateful person. He is someone who is frank about his convictions. You can trust him. Sometimes he might have seemed cold, but he was not really like that.

"My impression of him is that he is hard worker, strongly intellectually orientated and has excellence as his goal. It seemed to me that his door was always open for a discussion and one could take the liberty of chatting with – and differ from – him.

"It was a positive decision to appoint him at Stellenbosch. He rattled the cage here and played a particularly important role in raising awareness about diversity on the campus. I never had the impression that he was working according to a political agenda, but with a strong, focused academic agenda.

"He laid the foundation for change – for the better – and we will be able to build fruitfully on what he achieved. He promoted diversity everywhere on the campus, which can only have positive results."

## **2. Individualist – ADRI BECKER**

*(Institutional Planning official and formerly Personal Assistant to the Rector)*

"It was my privilege first to be Prof. Andreas van Wyk's personal assistant for ten years and then be in the same post for the first half of Prof. Chris Brink's term of office. After almost 14 years in this post I asked for a change.

"I have great admiration for Prof. Brink's organisational abilities, strong sense of discipline, excellent planning abilities, and dedicated and sustained hard work.

"I am an 'old-fashioned' mother with children who are former Maties, and did not always understand his thinking and ideas on transformation, But I often sat in on discussions around the table, listening to him, and then being left with a clearer perspective. One could discuss one's differences of opinion with him.

"Sometimes he could be difficult and overly fastidious, because he set high standards for himself and for others. If he became angry, he was really angry, but never without a reason. Then it was over, because he was not the kind of person who held personal grudges against people.

"He is not rigid and one could persuade him to adopt another point of view. He is also not the kind of person who is constantly peering over your shoulder and prescribing to you what to do. He allowed you your freedom, but then expected you to act responsibly and dutifully. He always treats all people the same. I also got to know him as an empathetic person. Yet there is an aloofness about him and so he is not always experienced as a warm person.

"I shall remember him as an ambitious person who has plan for his life. He strives for goals and is strongly individualistic. But he also has both feet on the ground.

"In his relationships with his family, I saw him as a family man. It was especially through his relationship with his oldest daughter, Carmen, that I got to see a special side of his nature, and this has left a lasting impression on me. She has Down's Syndrome, and I believe it is precisely her circumstances that has given him a special sympathy with the disadvantaged in society. This is also what Prof. Brink fought for – to allow everyone a reasonable opportunity within their abilities. He sees beyond disability and believes that everyone cherishes a dream. He will never dampen the enthusiasm of a dream, no matter how unrealistic it may be."

## **3. Solid foundation – EDDIE CUPIDO** *(Caretaker of the DF Malan building, Stellenbosch University)*

"I am a child from 'Die Vlakte' and have been at the University for 26 years already. Things have changed a lot, especially over the last three years or so. These changes began with Prof. Brink. He introduced changes to open up things for everyone and to give everyone an opportunity to make a contribution. He changed working conditions and encouraged co-operation between colleagues. He communicated with us and acknowledged good work.

"You get a warm feeling when you see him. He comes to greet you with hand held out and asks how you are. He remembers your name and is interested in you as a person. It is his personality that makes



him so successful. He does not see a person's colour; he sees only the person, and treats everyone in the same way. When we talk about him, we say he is our manna from heaven.

"To speak directly: he destroyed apartheid here. He took notice of people who had been here for years, but who were never noticed. His vision was one of moving forward together and working for good things.

"He built a solid foundation here. He placed us on a rock. We can go forward with confidence.

"Humility is part of his personality. He is consistent; you know where you stand with him. He is a sincere person with a good heart. What is special about him is that he created the gap to give people opportunities. He gives you the opportunity and then it is up to you whether you want to take it. If you do, he will always support you.

"He thinks about the future and how he can improve people's lives. Just look at all the things he introduced. Computer courses for ordinary people. He strongly encourages literacy classes for staff. He inspires one to get ahead. To put it briefly: he came to enrich our lives. He brought wisdom. He said himself that there are opportunities for everyone, but it does not help if he offers you a spoonful of food and you do not eat.

"He was an asset for the University. The man who made the impossible possible. He led from the front. He makes one proud to be a part of the University.

"He is the same person every day – friendly, humble. He will always find the time for a little chat. We were never in his shoes to experience how difficult it must have been for him, but he never made his problems other people's problems.

"He is the kind of person who gives you of his time and remembers to acknowledge the important moments of others. At graduation ceremonies he moved around and congratulated parents and students. When students called him for a photograph with them, he was always willing. He was a man of the people, a genuine human being with no pretences."

#### **4. Empathetic – YVONNE CYSTER** *(Secretary at the Research Development Division, SU)*

"I have now been at the University for eight years, after working for many years at UWC. I drove through Stellenbosch to Bellville every day and never thought that I would be able to work here one day.

"Ever since Prof. Brink has been here, he has been a pillar of strength. In 2002 I was diagnosed as having cancer and had to undergo a bone-marrow transplant. I was on sick leave for a year. This is where Prof. Brink comes in. When he heard about my sickness and that I would be medically unfit for year, I got to know the man who cares. I did not for one moment think that he would be involved as Rector.

"Things were difficult for us, financially too. One day Johanna van Niekerk, his secretary, came to our house in Kylemore. She brought a bunch of flowers from the Rector, and with the flowers there was a

personal cheque from Prof. Brink. He wrote that he understood that this was a difficult time for us and that he wanted to make a gesture of support for us.

"I have never before experienced such a gesture of sympathetic fellowship. It was not about the cheque, but the intense and sincere caring, the honest empathy with one's situation, the compassion because he cares for you as a person. I'm not sure that he would say anything about this, but I want to tell everyone.

"Two years later the cancer spread. I had to have a hip-replacement operation. He went out of his way to find out how I was doing.

"To me, he is a colleague, a fellow human being who treats every one in the same way. I have great respect for him. If I think of everything he has done and of his way of doing things, I feel great admiration for him as a person.

"He was someone who earned your respect and gave us a new image of the white man. He brought another dimension of humaneness to Stellenbosch. His arrival here was a blessing. We shall all remember him for his humanity, sympathy and empathy with others. In the eyes of many of us, he is a hero."

#### **5. Clear goals – FRANCOIS DE KOKER** (*Information Technology support team, SU*)

"As Rector Prof. Brink made many demands on, and expected a great deal from, IT staff so that he could utilise his equipment maximally. He did this on the basis of his position, not necessarily in his personal capacity.

"Prof. Brink even phoned me on a Christmas Day to solve a computer-related problem. I was very happy to assist him at any time that he needed me and to the best of my ability. My highest priority was to support him in his technological requirements. He also always found the time to acknowledge services rendered to him. Prof. Brink made you feel that he noticed you.

"It was my privilege to attend his meetings, presentations and the institutional gatherings, for example, of the Senate, Council and Convocation, to provide computer support when this was required.

"I would say that he has achieved a great deal at the University. Diversification and transformation were processes that he had to carry through. He was the middleman in getting the University to change its institutional culture. I have great admiration for him.

"Prof. Brink steered the University in a direction that will benefit its survival in more than one field, and the results of this are already there to be seen. Just look at the successes in the financial, academic and research areas that have been achieved during his term as Rector.

"Prof. Brink made an important contribution and established new patterns of thinking at the University. I always found him to be totally professional. I saw him as a man with goals and a clear vision. Prof. Brink always made you understand that what he sought was excellence and perfection for all. I am very proud to be associated with Stellenbosch University."

## 6. Right man, right place – LOURENS DU PLESSIS

*(Student leader and former Chair of SU Students' Representative Council, 2004)*

"The Rector and I were, in manner of speaking, first-years together. In the subsequent few years many things came to a boiling point on the campus. There were issues such as the ANC Youth League and the SASCO march against Afrikaans, the after-effects of the Slabbert Commission's recommendations regarding a Student Dean, and changes that Prof. Brink made to his management team.

"Prof. Brink did sometimes create tensions within the student community because of his actions by, for example, announcing in his inaugural speech (2002) that the residence pubs, which were selling liquor illegally in residences, would be closed down. A small thing not communicated correctly led to unnecessary tensions, because it was misunderstood. There was also tension around the post of Student Dean as representative of student interests on the Management team. Students thought that he wanted to exclude their views from this important decision-making level.

"Among students there is an assumption that you must adopt a hostile attitude towards Management, otherwise you are not doing your work properly as student leader. But with Prof. Brink you could actually sit around a table and discuss things frankly with him. He will work with you to find a solution and come to an agreement.

"I never had any doubt that Prof. Brink was the right person at the right time at Stellenbosch. He created many opportunities for people who had previously been overlooked. He reorganised procedures and made them more streamlined. He improved the financial position of the University dramatically, and great progress was made academically.

"He met with strong resistance from people who opposed any form of change, which they regarded as interference. A lot of this resistance had to do with fear of change, and he had to deal with that. In Prof. Mamphela Ramphele's words, he has a 'tidy mind', which is pre-eminently capable of organising, seeking patterns and categorising. This is why he could move into the University like a fresh breeze and introduce innovations.

"Prof. Brink was able to muster the University to play a leading role – in South Africa as well as in the rest of Africa. But the language issue took up too much time. The letters column of *Die Burger*, for example, had a detrimental influence by creating perceptions which did not hold up to the realities.

"Transformation was lagging far behind when Prof. Brink started here. He could lead from the front as someone from outside without vested interests or acting on behalf of any interest group. But this also left him without any real networks. He could not really do anything else; there was too much that had to be done too quickly, but eventually there was too much tension.

"With the Convocation he had to deal with heritage issues. People who opposed change very strongly. What was lost sight of here is that Stellenbosch University is a national institution of higher education. Too often the impression was left that the annual Convocation meeting was a gathering of a group of ageing Afrikaners preparing to march to an old National Party meeting to listen to what the master had to say. This created perceptions in the media that were detrimental for everyone."

## **7. Sympathetic – BERNARD HEESSEN** (*Information Technology support team, SU*)

"At first it was my task and privilege to provide a computer support service to Prof. Brink. He has a sound technological understanding, but did sometimes need support. He was very focused on using his time productively and usually wanted to know precisely how much time would be needed to solve a problem.

"Prof. Brink also asked me to provide computer assistance whenever he had to make PowerPoint presentations during Council and Senate meetings, as well as on various other occasions. He wanted to be sure that the equipment would function perfectly and not shift the focus away from his presentation. My task was to check the equipment thoroughly in advance, prepare his submission on the computer and also to be available if he should need assistance during these occasions. He always expressed his gratitude for my services.

"I was also struck by the sympathy he showed for events in my life. When my mother died, I received a personal letter from him, and at Christmas he always sent me a card.

"His term of office was characterised by some stormy times, but in my opinion these did not put him off his stride.

"Transformation had to come and he implemented it. I experience this as wholly positive and do not feel threatened. His contribution brought Stellenbosch to a turning point."

## **8. He takes your hand – GEORGE JOHNSTONE** (*Cleaner, Stellenbosch University*)

"I was born in Stellenbosch and have been working for the University for 33 years. I met Prof. Brink in 1979 when he was at the Mathematics Department. At that time already he was a man of spiritual depth. He is a very, very good person, who is always interested in you. I came to work here after leaving school in Standard Eight. One afternoon he came to talk to me and asked if I did not want to study further, if I did not want to go to night school and get my matric.

"I never even thought of this. But he motivated and encouraged me. I went to night school and passed matric. I was encouraged by him personally. I am proud of this.

"He left here to go to UCT, and one day he came back to say hello. He wanted to know if all was well.

"What is special about him is that he treats everyone the same. He does not make distinctions. If he greets you and speaks to you, it is absolutely sincere. He does not forget you again.

"When he returned in 2002, he came to visit us again. He said: 'Now we are working together as colleagues'. The contacts he makes are like those between friends – real friends. He is essentially a very good man, sincere in what he does. I am very pleased our paths crossed. He is the kind of person who takes you by the hand and encourages you to move forward.

"His influence here has been very good. Things have changed so much. He changed the rules. In the past we could not simply come into this building (the rectorate). Now everything is open; everyone is welcome.

"I have been at the University since Prof. Wilcocks's time, but Prof. Brink has brought about such great changes."

**9. Everyone the same – SHIRLEY LOVE** (*Office Assistant, Stellenbosch University*)

"I have been working at the University for 31 years already, and the last eight years here at Block B. We are almost like a family here. This is thanks to the atmosphere created by Prof. Brink. When he comes in to work in the mornings, he first greet you and asks how you are. He asks after the children and he remembers what you say, because later he will enquire about it again. He is a very good person, friendly, down to earth. He has a human approach. You feel that you matter to him. His interest is genuine. He listens patiently to your whole story, because he is really interested.

"He is a different kind of person – a people's person, as we would say. He notices you and treats everyone in the same way. He does not make distinctions. This is what always strikes me about him. He is a very friendly man; there is always a smile on his face.

"I will always remember him as somebody special. He stands out for me. He brought changes that also improved our working conditions. He is part of a team and lets you feel that you are an important part of his team.

"The people in the community appreciate him. He moved into the community and learned about our circumstances. Professor is a lovely person with a good heart. He makes you feel important, because to him everyone is the same."

**10. Innovative and creative – BARBARA POOL** (*Manager: Projects, Stellenbosch University*)

"My function is to establish order and structure within the management context and in this capacity I worked closely with Prof. Brink.

"For Prof. Brink effective planning is important. He had a vision and worked productively towards achieving it. This is why he set specific goals that had to be achieved. He is frank about what he expects from you and also creates opportunities for discussing this at an intellectual level. You might have differed from him, but if he felt strongly about his position, he stuck to it.

"Prof Brink challenged people to think and to seek solutions to problems. He himself has the ability to identify the core of a complex problem. If decisions had to be taken, he never shied away from the responsibility of doing so.

"Prof Brink is innovative and he challenges you to think and to develop your own potential as a person. He is creative rather than prescriptive, and allows room for growth. The changes he introduced over the past five years generated a great deal of energy and inevitably provoked reactions. In the process new growth-points and the potential for further innovation were created. This in itself produced a particular momentum.

"It was easy to work with him as a person. He treated everyone as a colleague on the same level. The same applies to the women on the staff, who were there on merit and because he believed in their potential.

"I found him to be sympathetic, with a great deal of empathy for you as an individual. You could discuss things with him frankly. He listened and acted in a supportive way. He set the same high standards for himself as he did for the people who worked with him.

"His legacy lies in the innovation that he brought about. His arrival at the University broadened our horizons – also at the personal level for those who worked with him."

#### **11. He is a good listener – LENIE SIEBRITZ** *(Cleaner, Stellenbosch University)*

"I have already worked for three Rectors –Professors De Vries, Van Wyk and Brink. I got to know the pressures they faced through the years and liked to be able to help. They should not have to go searching for me. I must be here for them. We are a great team here at the rectorate. This means it is a pleasure for me to come to work. Our Prof. Chris Brink is a joy. Perhaps other people have a different image of him. But as far as I am concerned, he is a person who shows an interest in you. He comes to work with a smile and always finds the time to ask how things are going. I do not know any other side to him.

"He is prepared to listen, and he is a good listener. One day he asked how I was and I replied: 'I'm well under the circumstances.' He then asked: 'Lenie, under what circumstances?' I told him that my husband, Martin, is ill. He asked if I needed help and whether he could help. This really touched me. I realised he is a people's person. He is intensely interested. This is the part of him that I know: the part that listens and is interested and will do something to help.

"Professor was overseas when Martin passed away. From where he was, he arranged that a wreath and flowers be delivered to my home – this touched me deeply. Every evening he arranged for food to be delivered to my home. This told me so much about this man, because he did not have to do it. He notices things; he remembers and does things.

"He is a good person with a heart. He talks to you like an equal. He is an important man with humility. He does not look down on people. Ask around; everyone will say he treats everybody in the same way. If it's your birthday, you receive a personal note from him. If there is a party or special tea up here, then he includes us all. You are part of the company. He makes sure you do not feel left out.

"I'm happy to know someone like this – someone who appreciates what you do and who notices you. He is always sincere. He says thank you. He has a good heart that is genuine. I will always remember Professor for the person he was here."





## **12. To make a difference – Martie van der Linde**

*(Chief Liaison Officer: Marketing and Communication, Stellenbosch University)*

"My first meeting with Prof. Chris Brink was at the Cape Town Airport, when he visited Stellenbosch shortly after his appointment as Rector and Vice-Chancellor.

"He invited me for a cup of tea and insisted that I call him by his first name. I shied away from this as it was protocol at Stellenbosch University for the Rector to be addressed in his official capacity as 'Professor'. But his answer was: 'Now you make a difference. My name is Chris – please call me that.' From the word go, therefore, he broke down barriers. All people were equal for him, and by calling everyone by their first names he established an atmosphere of common fellowship.

"From the very first day Chris looked with fresh eyes at Stellenbosch University and saw things which the rest of us had not noticed. He felt strongly that the students should have a greater awareness of service delivery and responsibility in society.

"I worked closely with him as far as functions, special occasions and visits were concerned. Having good background information about the events that he had to attend was very important for him to ensure that he was well informed about the facts. From him I learned that something is either right or it is wrong; there is no middle ground.

"I believe that Chris Brink was the right man at the right time in the history of Stellenbosch University. He prepared the way for the changes that had to take place, and he believed that what he was doing was best for the University. Personally I shall remember Chris as someone who led us to new insights, and who acknowledged people's human dignity."

## **13. Priority oriented – JOHANNA VAN NIEKERK** *(Personal Assistant to the Rector)*

"I initially resisted working for Prof. Brink. I saw him through the eyes of other people, who were strongly opposed to what he had done at Stellenbosch. But within a short time I realised that this image of him was distorted and that one could work pleasantly and easily with him.

"What struck me immediately was how well organised he is. He plans well in advance. He finalises matters and is priority oriented. His desk is always tidy and his diary is well-organised and practical. What I appreciated about him was the way in which he divided up his day and kept to that. Every morning an hour was set aside so that we could go through the post and deal with other matters. I had access to his office and system. He did not hide things and he trusted you.

"He is systematic. He prepares for every meeting and appointment. He allowed me to plan his diary with him. Because he works in such an organised way, we could always finalise what we had to do within ordinary office hours. I can truly count on the fingers of one hand the times we had to work late into the night, but then it was because a crisis had arisen.

"I was always struck by his sympathy for other people. He makes time for you and listens to what you have to say. He is informal by nature and was just "Chris" to us here. This made the atmosphere much more informal, but there was always discipline and respect.



"He had a lot of empathy with people and I remember how distressed he was when he heard, for example, of a student who had died. He immediately sent a letter of sympathy to the parents.

"The negative criticism directed at him he processed in his own way. He did not allow it to put him off his stride. He remained focused on his goals.

"Despite my initial resistance, it was easy to adapt to working with him. His attitude is positive and his disposition towards others is sincere. You cannot but appreciate him.

"What I noticed particularly about him was that he made a lot of time for those who had been marginalised before. Everyone was important to him. He was able to engage easily with everyone and was able, for example, to see beyond any disability. To him we were all equal. It was a privilege to be able to work for him."

#### **14. Brings people together – MOOS VAN NIEKERK** *(Parking official, Stellenbosch University)*

"I have had contact with the University for 32 years and have been working here at Protection Services at Block B for four years. I had contact with Prof. Brink every day. He is a most likable person, who does not change from day to day. A people's person. There is a smile on his face every day. He was always interested in you personally. He made time to listen and, if he could help out, he would.

"He waves from his car. He is a sincere man, someone who does not make distinctions between people. He treats us all the same; we were all important for him. This is the way he made us feel.

"He had the ability to make you feel comfortable talking about anything, even personal matters. With his relaxed manner he was able to bring people together; people moved closer to one another. People who had never spoken to one another also began to talk together. There is more humanity here since he came.

"Things have changed a lot – for the better, I would say. Prof. Brink is interested in the person, not in skin colour or the other things that divide people. He set the example. He was the same every day and treated everyone the same.

"He brought brown and black people closer together, and also brought them closer to white people. He brought the idea that this is everybody's university and that we should all work together. So I would say he showed that if we could do this, then we could build a nation together. He did this well, because he is a sincere man. This is what he leaves behind: pride at being part of the team.

"I am truly sad that he is leaving. This is a great loss for us. But I know that long after he has left, we shall remember him as a special person. He is a sympathetic person who cares for those close to him. You can trust him because he is an honourable man.

"He was a great man at the University, but I saw him as a friend – a great, great friend."

**15. This I like – RIKA VOLLGRAAFF** (*Student, Stellenbosch University*)

"I met Prof. Chris Brink in 2004 as News Editor of *Die Matie*. As Chief Editor in 2005 and as a monitor at the Welcoming Week in 2006 I later had regular contact with him.

"As far as I am concerned, Chris Brink was anything but a fair-weather friend. He never shied away from controversy or criticism. On the contrary. Although I strongly doubt that this was his intention, he sometimes created the impression that he wanted to swim upstream in principle. But I really appreciated the fact that he never allowed himself to be intimidated by the Stellenbosch elite. He did not establish himself in the cosy social circles of Mostertsdrif. He did not have much time for 'the way things have always been done at Stellenbosch', and I admired him for that. He did not mechanically fall into line with the *status quo*.

"Stellenbosch needed someone who did not shy away from radical changes. Certain things had to happen quickly and effectively. It was necessary to be firm and clear about transformation and diversity – and particularly people's attitudes towards these things. In this respect Brink was the right person at the right time. If I look, for example, at the huge change in the University's welcoming programme for first-years, I must give Brink credit for his vision and determination. He also made mistakes, but ultimately achieved a great deal".



## *PART IV*

*Stellenbosch inclusive –  
Reinventing Stellenbosch*



# THERE SHOULD BE CLOSER LINKS BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND THE TOWN

*Eikestadnuus Editorial* 8 February 2002

In its striving to become a top university the University of Stellenbosch cannot separate itself from the community. **ELSABÉ RETIEF**

There is a perception in Stellenbosch that "town" and "gown" are not particularly close to one another, and that the University to a large extent goes its own way independently of the town.

He has been in office only for a month, and he is still finding his way about town, but last week *Eikestadnuus* paid a visit to the new Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch, Prof. Chris Brink, to hear his views on the role of the University in the town, as well as on co-operation between the University and the town.

"The town and the University each have their own distinctive character. But we need to move away from a sense of 'us' and 'them'", he said.

"It seems to me that interactions which should be happening as a matter of course are actually not happening here at all."

According to Prof. Brink, a university should maintain continuous contact with role players such as the higher education sector, the government at national, provincial and regional levels, and with business and industry.

"This is the so-called 'virtuous circle', where co-operation between the sectors occurs naturally, simply out of self-interest. This is evidently not the case here."

According to Prof. Brink, there is also a fourth role player in Stellenbosch: the non-governmental organisations and the local community.

"The University must see itself as a role player in continuous discussions between all role players," Prof. Brink says. "If such an active process does not yet exist, we must get it underway. And this is not for altruistic reasons – it is in the University's own interests to get these processes going."

He stresses that in its striving to be a top university, the University cannot separate itself from the community. The University's motto, "Your knowledge partner", symbolises this link between knowledge and partnerships.

Although several faculties are already managing a number of community projects, Prof. Brink also notes certain projects such as fund-raising through the University Carnival and Matie Community Service, which extend over the whole University.

For him it is important that that University should be an "engine of growth". In Australia, where he was Vice-Rector of the University of Wollongong, universities are classified as metropolitan, regional and rural universities. "Stellenbosch may be regarded as a regional university. It is important that such a university should be an 'engine of growth' for the region within which it is established, that it should form an integral part of its community. Especially in a world where economic growth is driven by knowledge."

Another role that the University can play in the community is involvement in the tourist industry, one of the largest employers in the town.

"The University receives many international visitors," Prof. Brink points out. "One can look at how these visits overlap with the tourist industry and see how we can use this to introduce the University."

He is also open to joint marketing of the town and the wine industry within the existing structures.

When asked about how the University could become more closely involved in the management of the town, he refers to other foreign universities where university staff engage in continuous liaison with their counterparts in local management councils. They meet regularly to discuss issues of common concern.

He also thinks that liaison between the University's Marketing and Communication division and that of the Municipality is important.

Prof. Brink also emphasises the importance of open discussion and mutual feedback. "This must take place not only internally, but also with the town and the local government."

A sensitive point – for both the University and the town – is alcohol consumption and night life among the students, especially in the town centre. What particularly interests Prof. Brink in this respect is the underlying reasons for the night-time culture and alcohol consumption among students. He feels that there are sufficient rules and that they are applied adequately, but that the causes of this phenomenon should be investigated more thoroughly.

"Alcohol has always been available. The availability of more money could be a contributing factor. If it is true that the University consists just of rich white middle-class students, perhaps we need to do something so that the University does not consist exclusively of such students.

"And if it is true that they seek some kind of escape in drinking, we must find ways of encouraging communication with one another in a more diverse environment."

## *IN ONS BLOED [IN OUR BLOOD]* – AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO WRITING HISTORY

AMANDA BOTHA

The experiences of a marginal community that was once at the centre of Stellenbosch

Although the first contact between the University Management team and the brown community of Stellenbosch was made in July 2000, such contacts gained momentum during Prof. Chris Brink's term of office as Rector. Several initiatives were launched in a deliberate attempt to bring the University and the town closer to one another and more involved with each other.

The research project on, and the publication of, the history of 'Die Vlakte', which appeared in 2006, did much to improve the relationship between the University and the brown community of Stellenbosch.

In *In ons bloed* voices that have long been silenced can now clearly be heard again. To quote from the book itself: "These deeply-rooted experiences have at last been freed from the past in which they were trapped, like a healing flow of blood that binds us together".

According to the mayor of Stellenbosch, Lauretta Maree, this book sharpens our awareness of the uniqueness of Stellenbosch. By the 1960s a community of some 3 500 people was living in 'Die Vlakte'. This was the area roughly marked out by Victoria Street, Bird Street, Banhoek Road and Joubert Street. In terms of the Group Areas Act, the people in this area had to move to Cloetesville and other areas on the margins of the town in the late 1960s.

Before these communities were separated, Stellenbosch was a place where the different groups lived in harmony. Different communities, religious groups and people with different social backgrounds shared and contributed to the town of Stellenbosch.

A former mayor, Mr W.F. (Willie) Ortell, who was closely involved in the project, and who grew up in 'Die Vlakte' himself, says that *In ons bloed* "finally breaks the long silence" of the people of 'Die Vlakte'. Their voices recall the "memories of a mutilated community". In this way "a vital piece of the town's history has been restored".

Reverend Simon Adams, minister of the Volkskerk (People's Church), acknowledges the "invaluable" contribution of Stellenbosch University. "Yes, Stellenbosch University, the former maternity ward of apartheid, helped to give birth to a history produced by the people, for the people. This is indeed a people's history for which we have yearned so long, in which the striving for an acknowledgement of the human dignity of the 'non-people' finds expression."

Prof. Julian Smith (Vice-Rector, Stellenbosch University) says that *In ons bloed* is a revealing indication of growing mutual understanding and shared vision. The University defined community interaction as one of its strategic role-playing priorities in Vision 2012. The community action plan should ensure that significant and mutually beneficial partnerships can be formed in a sustainable way. One of the elements of transformation is that historical misrepresentations should be rectified or at least contextualised. In this respect the project of writing the history of 'Die Vlakte' articulates a dimension of the past that has been suppressed and silenced.

Prof. Albert Grundlingh (Chair: Department of History, Stellenbosch University), who was closely involved in the project, thinks that *In ons bloed* is a corrective to the glossy publications on the history of Stellenbosch (such as the volume on Stellenbosch [1929] to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town, and the commemorative volume *Three Centuries* [1979]). These books present "a half-history of the town" seeing that they deal largely with whites, while "brown people are almost unconsciously left out as 'not historically important'."

Prof. Brink writes as follows in his Preface to *In ons bloed*:

"To this day Stellenbosch is a divided town. There is the white Stellenbosch of Mostertsdrif and 'Die Boord'. There is the brown Stellenbosch of Cloeteville and 'Die Vlei'. And then there is the black Stellenbosch of Kayamandi and 'Die Brug'.

"But there was a time before all this, when there was 'Die Vlakte'. There was a time and a place where people from different backgrounds and beliefs lived freely among one another here in Stellenbosch. Within two blocks from where the University is situated today there was a community where the lines of racial divisions were less rigid, and which already represented in embryonic form the kind of society for which we are striving today in this country.

"And there was time when the people of 'Die Vlakte' were deliberately and brutally separated, to be slotted into separate compartments according to a system that was considered at the time to be the solution to a 'problem'. There was a time when students from Stellenbosch University assaulted brown people in Andringa Street. There was the complex and unpleasant case of a school building, had once represented the hope of a community becoming the property of the University.

"No one can undo the past. But it is the responsibility of each one of us to be aware, to remember, and to learn. I hope that this publication, in which I had a particular interest from the very beginning, will help us to accomplish this aim."



# PROF CHRIS BRINK'S CONTRIBUTION TO "REINVENTING STELLENBOSCH"

**LAURETTA MAREE**, *Mayor of Stellenbosch*

I first became involved in the Rector/Mayor Forum after being elected as Executive Mayor in March 2006. By that time the monthly discussions between "Town" and "Gown" had already been underway since 2004 under my predecessor, Councillor Willie Ortell. The idea of "reinventing Stellenbosch" along with Chris Brink and his team from the University was already well established in the Municipality.

His exposition of sustainability as a key concept in the future planning of Stellenbosch was indicative of a social conscience and leadership that I came to admire increasingly in my contacts with him. As he expressed it:

Sustainability, for example, is a key concept in more than one sense. Urban sustainability is necessary to ensure that the town centre remains healthy, clear and vital, and that businesses do not move out completely to the periphery. Ecological sustainability is necessary to ensure that there are green areas and that they are properly monitored, that water is managed carefully, that the natural habitat is restored and preserved, and that recycling rather than dumping becomes a lifestyle. And social sustainability is necessary to become a single community. Ways must be found to bring people together as individuals, not as separate communities.

As far as I know, this Rector/Mayor Forum was a Brink initiative. In saying this I don't mean to say that there had been no high-level discussions between the University and the Municipality of Stellenbosch in the past. On the contrary. But what distinguishes this initiative is Brink's striving to set up a sustainable relationship and discourse.

At the time of his resignation we were in fact finalising a Memorandum of Understanding between our two institutions. As he put it: long after we are gone, this interaction must continue. The key issue is that two of the most important role players in the town should jointly think about, plan and work on creating a better Stellenbosch – away from the politics of the day and without taking cognisance of who is on which side. The best interests of our town and the welfare of our people (students included) are the only considerations.

From our joint deliberations over the past two years five working groups have been established that will address the diverse issues of the interests of the town and the University: local economic development, sport and culture, spatial planning and development, sustainable and renewable resource development and expenditure, and development in the field of electronics (internet access, broadband, etc.). In each of these joint working groups a considerable number of Chris Brink's ideas were influential.

As the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle in England, he is going to be concerned with, among other things, that university's greater involvement in economic and regional development. In the Rector/Mayor Forum meetings we have experienced at first hand his passion for uplifting and developing communities in the broadest sense, and we have no doubt about his future success in this field.

# TOWN AND GOWN STRIVE FOR WORLD-CLASS QUALITY

MARK SWILLING

In early December 2006 an historic meeting took place at the Sustainability Institute between a group of senior officials and politicians from Stellenbosch Municipality led by the Mayor, and a group of senior managers and academics from Stellenbosch University led by the Rector, Prof. Chris Brink. The purpose of this workshop was to agree on an implementation strategy for what had come to be known as the Reinventing Stellenbosch initiative. The workshop concluded with consensus on many issues and priorities, and an agreement that a Memorandum of Understanding needed to be drafted and adopted by both institutions. This was subsequently done, and the signing took place in April 2007. The ultimate goal of this new joint venture between Stellenbosch University and Stellenbosch Municipality is "Stellenbosch as a sustainable university town".

The origins of the Reinventing Stellenbosch initiative go back to late 2004, when Prof. Brink started to link together two lines of thought. Firstly, he was looking for ways to position Stellenbosch University within the global political economy as a knowledge leader; and secondly, he wanted to connect the University more firmly to its local context, namely the town of Stellenbosch. In a short paper he wrote in January 2005, which was a key stepping stone in the Reinventing Stellenbosch initiative, he wrote:

There is a new debate about excellence in Higher Education.<sup>1</sup> The egalitarianism of a few decades ago, and the fears of being branded as "elitist", are fading against the demands of competitiveness and globalisation. There are signs that the pendulum is swinging, once again, towards a tiered system with a small number of "world class universities" at the top of the pyramid.

Is Stellenbosch a world-class university? Students, staff and alumni would certainly like to think so – but in fact it must be said that the benchmarks employed in the past to reach such a conclusion were not of wide applicability, being so closely related to Afrikaner structures and culture. There have been some international surveys of late – 'league tables' if you like – identifying the top universities in the world, and Stellenbosch does not feature on any of these lists.<sup>2</sup>

This text reveals a theme that he relentlessly pursued during his tenure as Rector, namely counter-posing Stellenbosch University as a mediocre "Afrikaner University" to the notion of a "world-class" University within the context of economic globalisation that was systematically replacing the classical university that emerged from the era of welfare economics. Contrary to what some academics argued, and notwithstanding examples such as the University of Leuven, he did not believe these two could be reconciled within the complexities of the South African context. However, it was unlikely that a public university such as Stellenbosch was ever going to be able to access the massive state and private sector resources required to compete with the world's leading universities. A unique angle needed to be found. Herein lies the origin of the idea of a "university town" and from there the bold notion of an international "league" of university towns, with Stellenbosch University in a lead position within such a "league". In other words, Professor Brink realised that the University's unique spatial and biophysical setting provided

a strategic contextual advantage that simultaneously created a global platform and finessed the threat of mediocrity.

The problem was that the University had virtually no relationship to the new integrated non-racial town of Stellenbosch and the Municipality in particular. To be sure, academics and particular departments had developed various strategic partnerships and working relations in sport, with local schools, cultural networks, development agencies and environmental work. However, as Professor Brink often said with some dismay, "How can you have a University Town if the Mayor and Rector never meet?" The strategic intent of this question was clear – no one doubted that this University and the town of Stellenbosch belonged together, but the advantage was that the town was now non-racial (even though some had not noticed). As a result, the first meeting with the Mayor and his senior colleagues took place in February 2005 and it was agreed that a monthly meeting would take place.

In July 2005 the Rector tabled a document at the monthly Rector/Mayor Forum entitled *Reinventing Stellenbosch: A Strategic Framework*. The summary paragraph at the start captures the essence of this approach:

The essence of the Reinventing Stellenbosch idea is the desire to chart a new history for a town and a university which share a colonial and apartheid past. Neither can do without the other. Both share a commitment to greater social equity and well-being, increased levels of economic development, and a deeper commitment to ecological sustainability. Whereas the past was about "all for some for now", the future should be about "some for all forever". In a globalised knowledge-based economy and a rapidly changing South Africa, the University provides the key to the future, namely knowledge. The Municipality is the institution that expresses the will of the citizens of Stellenbosch to build a new town that leads the way by showing that the problems of the past provide the challenges for creative innovation and change. Inspired by the inclusive vision that Stellenbosch could become a "sustainable home for all", a key role of the University is to become a partner in the realisation of this vision.

This statement captures the vision of a shared destiny for the 'Town' and 'Gown', which was renewed and reconfirmed by the monthly meetings of the Mayor and Rector which actually did take place, alternating between venues, with the host acting as Chairperson of the meeting. Even the change-over from an ANC-led Council to a DA-led Council did not disrupt the continuity, with DA Council as committed as its predecessor to a special partnership with the University.

By March 2007 the new DA-led Council had appointed a new experienced and strong top management team, which committed itself to maintaining the 'Town' and 'Gown' partnership that was initiated by Professor Brink in 2004. This is not surprising, because Stellenbosch faces massive sustainable resource-use challenges, including insufficient landfill space, overfull sewage treatment works, water shortages, housing shortages, energy pressures and the cultural legacy of socially divided town. However, there is no doubt that it could rapidly become a world leader in sustainable urban development if the Municipality's leadership capabilities were truly combined with the knowledge resources that the University has to offer. This would be a realisation of the vision of Stellenbosch as a sustainable university town.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, for example, G Bowley: "How Harvard got ahead", *Financial Times Weekend*, 16/10/2004.
- <sup>2</sup> No South African or African university features on the "top 200" list of the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (although a number of Australian universities do). In the "top 500" list compiled by the Institute of Higher Education of Shanghai Jiao Tong University four South African universities are named – but not Stellenbosch. No other African universities are named.



## *PART V*

*Five years at Stellenbosch*







## FIRST INTERVIEW: BRINK, THE BUILDER, IS HERE

*Insig*, June 2001

An outsider, Chris Brink, has been appointed as the rector of the University of Stellenbosch – one of the institutions whose Afrikaans character is under pressure. LIZETTE RABE, from the Journalism Department at Stellenbosch, conducted an interview via e-mail with him in Wollongong, Australia, where he is Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

"If he can build here like his father used to build houses in Upington, then we are in good hands," a colleague of mine says on the steps of the Konservatorium on the campus. The Rector-to-be has just come from an impromptu meeting (at his request) with students and staff at "the Conserve", squeezed in an hour or so before he flies back to Australia.

He tells his colleagues that in his days as a teacher in Upington he rented a place that was the handiwork of Brink the Builder. What he has just seen – and the memory of that solid house – is apparently reassuring.

The question is whether Brink (Jr) – solid as his foundations are – is going to be able to rebuild Stellenbosch University into an institution that is going to measure up to the requirements of the time.

Universities are experiencing the pressures of change. Like South Africa. Like Afrikaans. More is expected of higher education. With less money.

A new reality awaits us: "A shrinking world in which an accelerating wave of technology increases interaction across international borders." A Brink statement.

Chris Brink (50), born and bred in Upington, second-oldest of five children, head boy of his school, brilliant postgraduate student, A-rated researcher, which makes him one of an exclusive group of South African academics, was initially an outsider for the post of Rector. He has doctorates in mathematics and philosophy – both of which qualify him as a logician – and has been described in *Die Burger* as someone with a "phenomenal knowledge of the university sector nationally and internationally". While he was at the University of Cape Town as head of the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, he also, among other things, helped to write their mission statement.

His CV overflows with qualifications, appointments, distinctions and awards, experience in management and planning, academic leadership and research, papers and conferences, published articles and books. Yet he describes his appointment as a "brave" one.

Why brave?

"To hand over the reins, in the context of a process of change, to someone who comes in from outside with new perspectives shows a willingness to participate actively in the process. It sends out a symbolic message", he says.

His vision for the future is that Stellenbosch University will take the lead in "building and expanding a knowledge economy".

**What do you mean by a knowledge economy?**

A knowledge economy is an economic dispensation with intellectual capital as its basis. It refers to the knowledge, skills and insights from intellectual labour, and linking them to the public interest. Building up intellectual capital entails the promotion of that kind of entrepreneurial spirit and innovative energy that produces new ideas. The knowledge economy is also sometimes called the weightless economy; it is not something you can hold in your hands, nor can you dig it out of the ground, or cultivate or manufacture it. It's what goes on in people's heads.

**But how are the thinking and the doing going to connect?**

What we do depends on what we think. And what we think stems from experience – from what we do, and what life does to us. The two concepts of thinking and doing are linked to one another. For me, to arrive at the point of doing, I first need to go and test my thinking against the realities of Stellenbosch University and South Africa.

**Please elaborate on your statement on "local loyalty, but global perspective".**

Regard this as yet another example (among many) of two concepts that can be seen as apparently contradictory, while in reality they interact with one another. Our local problems, our being rooted to a particular place, I believe, are better addressed within the context of an understanding and experience of global events.

**How can a university convert intellectual capital into real capital?**

This is the fundamental question of the new century, not so? The signs are already there that economic growth springs precisely from the ability to convert intellectual capital into real capital. California and Singapore bear witness to this. But there is no one recipe for making it work – everyone tries to find methods that work for them.

**Wollongong is Australia's University of the Year. What are you bringing back with you that you did not have before?**

When I left the Cape it was precisely to experience the link between research, on the one hand, and the business world, on the other. Wollongong is known for its success in this regard. I hope I can bring some of that back with me.

**Wollongong has about 20% international students. How do you see Stellenbosch University's outreach programmes to Africa in particular?**

I would like to see Stellenbosch University with a prominent international profile, in teaching as well as research, both with a strong African profile. Stellenbosch's Institute for Advanced Research, for example, has as one of its aims, among others, greater interaction with Africa on the problems of

Africa. As far as teaching is concerned, it is enriching for students of different backgrounds to study together. I would like to encourage this.

### **How do you see the role of tertiary education in South Africa?**

Autonomous and participatory – paradoxical as that may sound. A healthy and active university sector is essential for progress in South Africa.

### **How can Stellenbosch University be “the first choice for Afrikaans first-language speakers, but also the first choice for Afrikaans second- and third-language speakers” in practice – literally in one class?**

I see the practical situation in the classroom within the framework of codes of conduct rather than rules and regulations. Afrikaans is the point of departure in undergraduate teaching, and this is the way we want it. The demographic profile has to be broadened with students who do not use Afrikaans as their first language. We will therefore endeavour to recruit students who can manage comfortably in Afrikaans, although perhaps not sufficiently to follow all the nuances of every explanation in class. In this recruitment policy certain expectations and responsibilities are spelled out. Practically: in a class where some students cannot follow an Afrikaans explanation and ask that it be repeated in English, the lecturer has a responsibility to accommodate such students. I do not see a problem in principle here: repeating an explanation is a very common situation in class. To be able to give the second explanation in another language is perhaps a good thing for everybody. The balance comes from the fact that the entire student body also has a reasonable expectation that all the work must be covered effectively.

I want to encourage a culture in which the task of spreading knowledge, in whatever language or languages, does not depend only on the lecturers, but also on mutual interaction. There are places where similar situations are dealt with – simply as a matter of everyday interaction, not as one of threat and suspicion. I hope we can do the same.

### **How do we turn a potentially sticky problem – Afrikaans in parallel-medium tuition subordinate to English; the Minister of Education referring to the retiring rector as a Don Quixote; the National Plan for Higher Education – into a win-win situation for all parties?**

I have a very simple idea, and that is that we do not proceed from the point that the issue is a matter of serious conflict. I would much rather first become a participant in the discussion, and subject my thoughts to the test of experience. As a point of departure, I would see the interaction between the state and the university – including the use of Afrikaans – as a situation that has to be continually managed, rather than as a problem which you try to solve once and for all.

### **South Africa is in transformation. Afrikaans is in transformation. Stellenbosch University is in transformation. How can Afrikaans speakers contribute towards transformation?**

Talk to people. Be interested. Take part. Work towards the things you hope for, rather than against those you fear.

### **On "domestic affairs": You have described initiation as "structural violence"?**

The obvious answer – prohibit it – may not necessarily be the right one. A prohibition is also a kind of exercise of power, and you need to take care that you do not fight against something you object to with means that you find objectionable. What is required is a change of culture. Newcomers should be empowered with the knowledge that the University has an aversion to practices that humiliate anyone. And the other way round: incumbents must be encouraged to welcome newcomers with hospitality. Hospitality means that the incumbents must make themselves available to newcomers and be of service to them.

What it does not mean – and what I am opposed to – is any form of exercising power whereby incumbents misuse their position in order to compel newcomers to conform.

### **What about the fact that a high percentage of especially undergraduate Maties are guilty of alcohol abuse at Stellenbosch University?**

One must look at the possible causes. Alcohol abuse, and more generally substance abuse, could at best be explained as a kind of experimentation that forms part of growing up. But it is perhaps more of a form of escape, a lack of self-confidence and security. Then it becomes part of the University's educational task to prepare such students for life so that they no longer find this kind of abuse necessary.

### **You said Stellenbosch is a "homecoming". Why is this?**

Stellenbosch is where I took up my first full-time academic post, where I bought my first house, where my wife and I met and got married, and where our first child was born. To come back after sixteen years is like a homecoming.

### **Married to Tobeia, who is, among other things, the co-writer of the Afrikaans school textbooks Ruimland and whose further studies show a specific interest in Jung's psychology; father of a "special" teenager and two toddlers – what are the Brinks like at home?**

Tobeia and I are different kinds of people. I am rational, she is intuitive. I do one thing and then the next, she can do three things at the same time. I squeeze the toothpaste tube at the end, she squeezes it in the middle. From her I have learnt not only to appreciate others' opinions, but also another kind of thinking.

Carmen, our oldest, is a Down Syndrome child. From her I learned to be less uptight, and to have greater appreciation of the moment.

From the two youngest I have learned how to work on the computer or to talk on the phone while preparing a bottle, changing a nappy or wiping away tears. Carmen, who turns 17 at the end of June, will hopefully be awarded her Grade 10 certificate in December at the local technological high school, where she is in a support class with seven others. She is an expert on pop stars and the internet. Hestia is almost three. She speaks English and Afrikaans with an Australian accent. Peter, for Petrus Johannes, has just turned one: he is walking around all over the place and threatens to start talking.

**What is your philosophy of life?**

A great deal of what I believe has to do with the idea that one gets pleasure out of doing something correctly and properly, and also that your self-interest can be advanced by thinking a bit more broadly about the interests of others.

**What is your advice to young white Afrikaners who feel that affirmative action prevents them from making a contribution to South Africa?**

There is often a difference between what one thinks the world ought to be like and the way the world actually is. I believe that we should always strive to make the world as we think it should be – but at the same time we need to live and work in the world as it is. I would thus ask whether there are not perhaps other ways to make a contribution than in the ways which they think they are being deprived of.

*(With acknowledgements to Media 24)*

# STELLENBOSCH, ALL BUT WRECKED

The first media interview with Rector Chris Brink appeared in the Afrikaans magazine *Insig*, mid-2001. Mistake. Because then things seemed to go wrong. Here LIZETTE RABE reports on the events of the past half decade – the sometimes fantastical, sometimes fanatical, sometimes phantasmagorical cosmic forces that raged around the phenomena Brink, Stellenbosch, Afrikaans, progression, regression – perhaps even, who knows, transformation. And also the media, which were not only a mirror, but also role players. Even if this seemed to have all the characteristics of a tragedy, it could have been our own comedy under the oaks. This is the drama of Stellenbosch, in a few simple acts.

*Dramatis Personæ: Brink, Stellenbosch, other known and unknown forces, and also "the media"*

*Scene: Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch*

## Prologue

*The great advances in civilisations are processes which all but wreck the societies in which they occur.* This is the insight of a British mathematician and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, who lived from 1861 to 1947.

When I wrote the *Insig* article in 2001 this quotation was already pinned up in a corner of a notice-board above my computer. But it did not have any impact on that piece. And I would never have thought that in the next five or so years I would glance at it so often. That I would try to understand the forces working on, and particularly under, the surface of the geopolitical concept Stellenbosch.

In mid-2001 Stellenbosch was an exciting place to be at – you could say on the brink of essential transformation. The mere idea that you could be part of a place and a time, potentially the symbol of a new understanding of what South Africa could be, was pure inspiration. The campus was invigorated with the ideal of a new energising inclusivity, in place of the stifling exclusivity.

And then the disillusion set in – Stellenbosch became the killing fields of various Afrikaner/Afrikaans psychoses.

Was this because "Stellenbosch" was a symbol? The last bastion that had to be defended above all else? The last precious treasure of a *volk* forged from the diaspora of hard-boiled European settlers? The geographical, political and certainly psychological dispossession of the Anglo-Boer War etched onto their souls? Who purposefully and desperately wanted to build up and preserve their own Master Race in the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by almost fifty "years of glory"?

After which it all crumbled to pieces. Cut off from the greater part of the modern world, manipulated by Leaders, with a capital "L", indoctrinated into a herd mentality – the polecat of the world.

In the midst of all this trauma, how could Stellenbosch also be abandoned?

So, at all costs, the last stand.

What follows is the drama, in a few acts, that played itself out in Stellenbosch over the past few years.

### **I. By way of background, the Whitehead quotation**

It was used on several occasions by the former editor of the *Die Burger* and foundation professor of the Stellenbosch school of journalism, Piet Cillié. He liked adding it to his own characteristic bits of wisdom and/or anecdotes as a bonus for his listeners. Once he introduced it, he would expand enthusiastically on the notion "all but wrecked".

This was the key phrase, and the one that got Cillié excited. It may seem as if everything is being wrecked in the process, yet – all but – it is progress that ultimately triumphs. There is no wrecking in the process.

As a Naspers employee, I sometimes went to visit Cillié, emeritus at that time, in his little retirement office on the 21st floor of the Naspers Centre. To the right, Table Mountain. To the left, the Olympia. Even in the time of the personal computer.

Along with the obligatory cup of tea, the visitor was generously regaled with choice bits of Piet wisdom. Or with selections from his impressive collection of anecdotes, which always had a distinctive "twist in the tale".

The one from Whitehead apparently made such an impression on me that I wrote it down after a visit, along with Cillié's Afrikaans translation. This was in the early 1990s, and it probably made sense in the exciting metamorphosis that South Africa was going through at the time. So much so that I pinned it onto the noticeboard above my desk on the sixth floor of the Naspers building, at that time the place where I worked. It came with me all the way to Stellenbosch – where the attempt to match the practical and the academic worlds almost led to a personal all but wrecked condition, when I ended up in the Cillié chair. Stellenbosch's *heilige Hallen* are another country in many respects.

But it was later, and for different reasons, that I often glanced at the scribbled and now rather tattered piece of paper – in an attempt to understand what was actually going on at Stellenbosch.

The words of the English mathematician/philosopher, passed on by a mathematician/philosopher (although official papers only for the first) were a key in trying to grasp the dynamics of a mathematician/philosopher who was attempting to reconcile Stellenbosch with the demands of the time. And walked straight into a brick wall.

Given the role of the media in the later Stellenbosch saga, it is probably not strange that a professor of journalism, a member of a "Stellenbosch family", was the bearer of the message. And to conclude this part of the story, perhaps just this trivial detail: Cillié's father was "shunted out" as Rector in the murky Afrikaner political undercurrents of his time – he had been a supporter of the "liberalistic" theologian Du Plessis. But they did later name the Education Building after him.

## II. Dear Reader, therefore consider now "Stellenbosch"

When a fellow student and colleague was thinking a few years back about whether he should associate himself with the notion of "Stellenbosch", I encouraged him. It was surely one of the most exciting tasks in the whole of South Africa to be part of a sometimes painful but effervescent metamorphosis of a place that was synonymous with the architecture of apartheid ideology, but that now not only wanted to, but had to, be part of new entity.

The Stellenbosch where centuries ago a young man – apparently aided by the fruit of the vine, admittedly – provocatively declared himself to be "an Afrikaner".

The Stellenbosch that was the cradle of our freedom of speech, with Adam Tas who eventually successfully dislodged a corrupt governor from his cushy job.

The Stellenbosch that became the home of a liberal Afrikaner elite, who then paradoxically refined first the sentiment and then the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism.

The Stellenbosch that gave birth to the unholy trinity of the old Nasionale Pers, the now defunct National Party and the (old?) University.

The Stellenbosch where town and gown produced an interesting intellectual stratosphere, where the "old families" assumed a certain entitlement, where the "newcomers" had to know their place.

The Stellenbosch which is a young person's paradise, with the priorities more or less being sport, sex and swotting. Where you are preparing for your future in all respects.

The Stellenbosch where German and Dutch predominate in the town centre during the tourist season, with bus-loads of pale Europeans in socks and sandals gaping uncritically at a colonial past under the white gables and the sheltering oaks.

The Stellenbosch where the concepts of "exclusion" and "inclusion" are graphically illustrated. *There* is Kayamandi. *Here* are our lily-white neighbourhoods. And never the twain shall meet.

The Stellenbosch that, incredibly, produced independent thinkers.

The Stellenbosch trapped in a time capsule in the post-94 era. An institution that could calmly snooze for the moment in the peace of the ages. And when the time came to put words in to action, to *transform*, the shock was too great for those who wanted to preserve "their" Eerste River, "their" youth, "their" culture, "their" idyll, exclusively. It was as if the DNA of their very identity was at stake.

Because then Brink came.

## III. Brink and Stellenbosch

And it was almost too little too late. This was another phrase Cillie liked quoting. To his credit, also with reference to the political changes in South Africa.

Brink's task was simple. But complex.



Initially the protagonist, the toast of the town, the brilliant academic, the distinguished logician, someone with a "phenomenal knowledge of the university sector, nationally and internationally", according to *Die Burger*, later became, for whatever reasons, Brink the antagonist.

Before Chris or after Chris is probably more or less the way one looks at Stellenbosch, depending on where you stand.

But you do not need to analyse that first interview with him, or to dissect the subtext of a single speech, to realise there is no BC or AC.

It's the same Chris Brink. What he said in his first interview would be his targets, what he committed himself to in his speeches, remained the same. There was the advancement of a knowledge economy, along with the academic profile and reputation that had to be improved, the language ("an Afrikaans university"/a university that is also Afrikaans), the link between town and gown, internationalisation and especially a focus on Africa, a change in the institutional culture, including things such as the notorious initiation practices – "structural violence", as he called it.

The rational dreams, if you like, of a mathematically inclined philosopher.

A key term to describe what Brink wanted to do, as also mentioned in the *Insig* interview, is "local loyalty, but a global perspective". Even the language issue should have been – and could have been – resolved in terms of this notion. As he said himself in 2001, this is only apparently a contradictory concept.

Almost like *great advances that all but wreck*.

What had changed was perhaps that some people realised that transformation was no longer going to be a matter of paying lip service. And therefore wanted to cast out from their paradise the serpent that was causing all the trouble.

To mix the metaphors: he was in fact a very useful scapegoat upon which the sins of the fathers could be chased into desert.

Positions were taken up in the public and the private spheres. In a complex matter that required a great deal more subtlety and nuanced understanding, and that should never have revolved around a single person, it became a case of playing the man rather than the ball. You were reduced to being "for" or "against", depending on your point of departure.

Why?

Why and how did it come about that the carefully considered path for Stellenbosch in the 21st century – already formulated as the Strategic Framework BC, but only institutionalised as Vision 2012 AC – was derailed?

Five years ago it was our future, but now it is past.

How did Whitehead's *great advances* affect Stellenbosch "civilisation"? Were the rational dreams of the newcomer mathematician-philosopher of such a nature that the former "owners" became afraid that these dreams would wreck the University?

Why does this text have so many question marks? And why are there more questions than answers? Who was who's nemesis? Has the newcomer, the outsider, the lone ranger proved to be too much for this Wild West? Or was it the other way round?

#### IV. Enter the media

Hindsight would probably indicate that, in order to transform Stellenbosch, you also needed to have a carefully considered media strategy to accompany Vision 2012. Perhaps even your own spin doctor.

Because who was the Puppet Master who pulled what strings, and now sits grinning in his little corner about Chris Brink's premature departure from Stellenbosch?

The signs were probably already there in the very first *Insig* article. The suggested headline was a reflective question, "Die US se Verligting?" [*Enlightenment* at Stellenbosch University?], but it was abandoned. The reference was to the Age of Enlightenment, a favourite Brink topic. Because perhaps, possibly, Matieland's own age of Enlightenment had dawned. The headline was replaced with the more brusque *Brink, the builder*.

If the media are guilty of writing 'history in a hurry', what will Stellenbosch's history look like if the media were to be regarded as a reliable barometer?

And what kind of selective history would this be if "Stellenbosch" sometimes appears as an embarrassment for days on end on the front page of one newspaper, and not at all anywhere in another?

In the fairytale formula of serial reporting the hero became the anti-hero. The new heroes were the knights on their white horses in various forms, some even with their now notorious grey shoes. The villain was the wolf, the witch, the dragon, the dark beast from the jungle, who wanted to destroy everything that was precious – LANGUAGE!!! CULTURE!!!

Simple.

Have the Afrikaans media once again betrayed themselves? One *must* ask: what has become of the lessons of the past, when the proffered facts were not questioned, but simply accepted as Afrikaner gospel truths? Think of the story of the old man who believed in his *Burger* and his Bible.

Naturally the issue is far more complex than this. There are news values. For one paper, founded in a house that would later become the name of a Matie student residence, Stellenbosch is newsworthy of itself.

But it goes beyond this. In the theories about agenda setting, gatekeeping and framing, one must ask precisely who the agenda setters, gatekeepers and framers were?

Or was this a case of clever manipulation by certain role players to exploit Afrikaner fears for their own agendas? And what about the media, who were so easily tempted by yet another 'sexy' Stellenbosch story?

Another issue related to the media coverage on which we have to reflect: which came first? The letters column where the Battle of Stellenbosch was fought, or the news columns that followed up or responded to stories? One study on the representation of Stellenbosch in *Die Burger* showed that there was a "symbiotic" relationship between the letters and the news columns. According to the evidence from the newspaper itself, it was primarily retired people who thundered their way through the letter columns. And they were thus not representative, demographically or psychologically, of the newspaper's readers. Why then give them so much space proportionally?

Another question: were the media active participants? Or were the media in fact misused? Were there sufficient checks and balances – for each negative opinion, also a positive one; for each negative commentator, also a positive one?

It seems as if the public domain – the media – was used predominantly by those who responded negatively. Those who felt positive were apparently not interested in participating in the public debate. In any event, they had work to do. Although, according to available information, they supported Brink in various ways, they did so in the private sphere of an office or an e-mail.

Furthermore: coloured Afrikaans speakers – the majority of readers of *Die Burger* – were, so to speak, left cold by the whole sordid saga.

Did the media thus reflect history correctly? Can one talk, for example, about a "language debate" if the discussion was so largely one-sided? Did the media perpetuate those distorted perceptions? Did they pump up the level of hysteria to another level in a fairytale with a simple storyline: heroes with magic formulas to rescue Stellenbosch, the damsel in distress, from the clutches of the villain?

The media image of 'Brink the builder' changed to 'Brink the wrecker'.

## V. Stellenbosch, oh Stellenbosch

Above all: what is it about Stellenbosch that makes people fight in such a desperately reactionary way over the last imaginary "line in the sand"?

How does it come about that concepts such as "line in the sand" and *taalstryd* ("language struggle") are bandied about so provocatively?

Magersfontein, oh Magersfontein, here we go again.

Can some of us join forces only if The Identity is imperilled by a real or imaginary Total Onslaught?

When it was no longer possible to continue the Great Trek, the trek had to be advanced through the synapses of the soul. The Roman Catholic Peril made way for the Black Peril, which made way for the Red Peril, which made way for the ... Brink Peril?

At the height of the emotional language debacle there was the meeting of the Convocation, where it seemed that whole battalions of old Maties had marched forth from the beach-house belt, indignant with displeasure that "their" place had to be sacrificed to the new South Africa.

What can one report, on reflection, about that night in November 2005?

Disillusion and shame do not say it clearly enough.

Some members of Convocation discovered that remnants of the prehistoric species *Africanus Stellenbossiensis* were still alive and well – kicking for all they are worth against the pricks of change.

The behaviour of a certain Matie mob left even some of those who were anti-Chris with a conviction that they did not want to be part of *that*.

The majority that evening consisted of: some older people, but also younger ones – even kids who, instead of using their youth to rebel, trotted along tamely in the footsteps of the seniors – and then mixed in amongst these, a sound helping of “old boys”, comrades from days gone by, their spirits well warmed up after a visit to the local pub. With the accompanying bravado: they’ll fix the damn commies who want to take their place away.

And you ask yourself: this is the place where one is supposed to reflect on the University and its immediate as well as long-term problems?

What led to the unleashing of such mass hysteria? And why did Chris Brink become the target?

It was as if the little paradise tucked between the blue Cape mountains had cast off its cloak of loveliness and revealed the monster hidden under the illusion of a civilised university town.

But now, as the last last stand, to continue the battle idiom above: perhaps it is time for all parties to raise the white flag.

Stellenbosch deserves it.

And should this not be the legacy of a mathematical philosopher’s rational dreams?

## Epilogue

Fortunately the curtain will not fall just yet on the drama that is Stellenbosch.

In this place called Stellenbosch the unquenchable spirit of that first Afrikaner must survive; of Adam Tas – the one from the past, not the misled youths of today; of freedom and equality. Please, let’s forget about the brotherhood.

It is the University’s loss that Brink has left too soon.

But it is also a case of: the king is dead, long live the king. It is Stellenbosch’s gain that Russel Botman has taken over the role.

Incredibly, despite all the missed opportunities, Stellenbosch has ensured that the right person is in the right place at the right time to lead the University into its next phase.

The costumes fit perfectly. The stage has been built, the props are ready. The audience ... evidently waiting in expectation.

So, Act I, Scene I: Roll on, Russel.

*Botman in the Boland* must have a positive resolution.

After all, this is Stellenbosch. All but wrecked.

## LAST INTERVIEW: BRINK, FOR THE RECORD

**LIZETTE RABE** wrote the first article on Chris Brink in mid-2001 after his appointment had been confirmed. Here she conducts a "final interview" in the same question-and-answer style, also by e-mail, on the topics of Vision 2012, language, the media, the concept of Stellenbosch – and lies, rumours and gossip. Here, then, Brink – in his own words.

**At that time it was the "future" that you spelled out; now it is past, but if one looks at Vision 2012, which was so carefully distilled from the existing Strategic Framework, it is clear that Chris Brink's aims for Stellenbosch remained constant. Where and when do you think people/the media interpreted you incorrectly?**

In some cases, from the very beginning. It was already clear to me in 2001, during the interviews for the position of Rector, that what I said and wrote were being heard and understood in different ways. There were definitely people who could understand my goals for the University in no other way than by interpreting them on the basis of their own paradigms.

**What do you think was the reason for this?**

It had a lot to do with the myths of Stellenbosch, which I have written about elsewhere in this book. If you are trapped in the myths and cultural phenomena that have been active in Stellenbosch for such a long time, you would struggle to understand anything formulated outside of that framework about the University.

**Which aims are you satisfied have been achieved?**

The vision statement that I presented to the Council in 2001 was short and clear: that Stellenbosch should lead the creation and expansion of the knowledge economy in South Africa. I think we have made very good process in this respect.

**And on the topic of language. Your response to the statement: "Chris Brink and the language debate/debacle (depending on how you see it) and the media: The man was played, not the ball"?**

In my contribution "Transformation as demythologisation" I distinguish between two phases of acrimony in the public debates around Stellenbosch. In the first phase you are accused of being cowardly – that you are "bowing to government pressure", "trying to be politically correct", etc. In the second phase, once it becomes clear that you have a mind of your own, you are accused of being stupid – you don't have your facts right, you do not realise the consequences of your actions, and so on. But there is also a third phase, which kicks in when it becomes clear that you do in fact know what's what. This is when you are accused of malice. Then the hunt is on. Then no lie is too flagrant to be flaunted, no piece of gossip too banal to be repeated, and no personal insult so crude that it cannot be passed off as "satire".

**How much damage do you think has been done to Afrikaans in this "last bastion"?**

I think the greatest single set-back that Afrikaans suffered in the last five years was when *Rapport* decided to throw in its lot with the agenda of identity politics as practised by the FAK<sup>1</sup>, Solidarity<sup>2</sup> and the Afrikaner-

bond<sup>3</sup>. This was a serious blow to the legitimacy that Afrikaans was just beginning to acquire in the wider South African society.

**What does this say about Afrikaners at the beginning of the 21st century?**

That the single greatest factor in the consciousness of Afrikaners is still the fear of loss of group identity.

**And then, inevitably, the role of the media. If you were ever to find yourself in a similar position, with the hindsight you have gained, what would your media strategy be?**

For the University I would probably design a media and marketing strategy at an earlier stage, and more purposefully. For me personally, I'm afraid there would have been no point in doing things any differently from what I did, because I would not have been comfortable with any course of action other than my natural behaviour.

**What is your opinion of the Afrikaans media, their "ownership" of Stellenbosch, and the way they handle contentious issues?**

The role of the Afrikaans media in the language debate is different from their role in any other debate of public interest, such as crime or global warming or church unity. When it comes to Afrikaans, the Afrikaans media are protagonists themselves, not only commentators. There is thus a substantial element of self-interest in the way they deal with the language debate. But I don't have a problem with that. The problem was the uncritical way in which many journalists bought into the identity-driven paradigm, and that the "informed sources" who were quoted so frequently actually only consisted of a small circle of informants unable to reflect a diversity of ideas. I was often struck by the combination of ignorance and venom in the way stories about Stellenbosch were presented.

**Do you think the media were a stumbling block in Stellenbosch's transformation process?**

Not "the media" as such, no. Not even the "Afrikaans media" as such. But it is undeniable that the change in consciousness on the campus was ahead of the change of consciousness beyond the campus, and I think one could reasonably say that the Afrikaans media were slow to pick up this signal.

**And then, Chris Brink as Rector: What is the Stellenbosch that you are leaving in 2007 like compared to the Stellenbosch you found in 2002?**

The Stellenbosch I found was three towns: the white town of Mostertsdrif and Die Boord, the coloured town of Cloetesville and Die Vlei, and the black town of Kayamandi and Die Brug. With the help of the Rector/Mayor Forum and the Reinventing Stellenbosch initiative I think we began to address this phenomenon of three towns, although we have not yet succeeded in undoing it. As far as the University is concerned: I think the mental shift has occurred, and the campus community now realises that there is a wider and more exciting world in which they can play a significant role, rather than remaining hidden behind the beautiful mountains. We managed to get two things right simultaneously: the diversity figures improved in general by about 50%, and the University's academic profile has improved to such an extent that in terms of practically any of the standard indicators of academic quality we are among the top three universities in the country – and in terms of several of those indicators, we are first.

**Probably inevitable: What was the high point of your term of office – if there was one?**

After I announced my departure, I was riding out of town on my bicycle late one afternoon. At the crossing where you enter Cloetesville a fairly battered car full of people stopped next to me at the traffic lights – people in blue overalls and shop-assistant uniforms. The driver leaned out of the window and spoke to me. "Prof", he said, "We just want to say thank you for your pioneering work."

### **Even more inevitable: the low point?**

When I had to inform Council via the Chairperson that there is not a grain of truth in any of the gossip about Chris Brink that they hear around the *braaivleis* fires. As I put it:

The dilemma about gossip is that it almost automatically evokes the response "Where there's smoke, there must be fire" – a response that those who maliciously plant such a rumour are of course well aware of.

Or, on another occasion:

I can report that since Monday I have been repeatedly asked to deny or confirm "rumours" that I have accepted a post at the Department of Education. This is totally untrue, but the planting of such an untruth as a "rumour" could quite easily lead to a newspaper report that says: "Prof. Brink has denied rumours that ..." – with unpredictable consequences.

But this was a constant problem. When Tobea and the children go to the farm for six weeks to get away from the unpleasantness of the language debate, this does not mean "The man's wife is divorcing him". If I happen to have a naturally red face, this does not mean "The man has a drinking problem". And, just for the record, neither I, nor the University Protection Services, nor the Students' Representative Council, nor the Committee of Head Students in the Residences, nor the Marketing and Communication Division, ever saw a sticker on campus that said "Brink stinks" – something that *Rapport* simply reported as a fact.

### **And then: If you think of "Stellenbosch" as a concept, what comes to mind?**

Unfulfilled potential.

### **After your departure, you will soon be an observer of the Stellenbosch scene. What advice do you have for a collective approach to problem solving?**

Work for that which you hope for, rather than against that which you fear.

### **The Stellenbosch period is now over – will your paths cross again?**

We are keeping our house at Stellenbosch, and will be back from time to time. I did not achieve everything I had hoped for, but more than I expected. And with that I am satisfied that this phase of my life has now been completed.

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> FAK = "Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings", the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations.

<sup>2</sup> The renamed and rejuvenated former (white) Mineworkers Union.

<sup>3</sup> Previously known as the Broederbond.

# WHAT HAPPENED TO CHRIS?

## TOBEA BRINK

At the end of five years it is still difficult to understand what actually happened at Stellenbosch, with Chris. Many people write and talk about what happened to Stellenbosch or to the old Afrikaner order, but to my knowledge nobody has yet written about what happened to Chris Brink.

During the past five years it was sometimes impossible to do anything but shut one's eyes, hang in there and hope it's over before one could even begin to understand what was going on. Occasionally there was a moment when you could see clearly, just to be knocked off your feet by the next wave of rage and hatred. I never thought one person could be the focus of so much merciless hatred, the punch bag or spittoon for so many people for such a long time without losing balance. Often I observed how he withdrew behind a persona of "business as usual", while going deep into himself for strength to remain standing for another round. Those who came rushing forward against him had the advantage of being able to take turns, each one fresh for another encounter. The fact that he did not come apart or collapse at their feet apparently spurred some on to hit more and more below the belt. Initially I experienced a measure of ethnic commiseration for people who felt so threatened that they became so ugly. As their attacks became more and more brutal and personal, I simply felt ashamed of their crudeness.

But it's over now. It does not matter any more. Chris remains Chris, now with even more integrity and depth, more insight, more intelligent care and fine planning. More self-knowledge, considerably more knowledge of human nature, and always a chisel-sharp sense of humour. The same zest for work, the same passion for perfection that could drive anybody up the wall. And the same individualism that makes others uncomfortable when they quickly realise that he is never really "one of us" or "one of them", whoever "us" or "them" may be.

I have often wondered whether it is not actually this very aspect of Chris' personality that disturbs and discomforts people – that he does not belong to any group, however big or small, vulnerable or powerful, intimate or official. I sometimes watched people testing him for a commonality, to be able to say, "He's okay, he's one of us after all", and often I saw the conversation losing steam: another expectation disappointed. Especially when it became evident that he is not concerned about belonging to a group, as long as he can do his work.

People don't easily bond around ideas and values only. They look for the camaraderie of shared behaviour and social interaction. They did not find it with Chris Brink. He belongs to himself. It is difficult to get along with a person like that. Much easier to make a scapegoat out of him, or worse. Easier to spread damaging lies about him, or to start believing the manifest lies that one hears, because one does not feel responsible for protecting the individualist as "one of us". Once this threshold has been crossed, the feelings and truths of the individualist do not concern the group any longer. Then he



stands alone, because even those who would have wanted to support him quail under public pressure from the group to which they do belong.

But it was also his passion for doing things right that incurred so much wrath. I remember how, after his appointment as Rector of Stellenbosch University, he already started preparing himself in Australia by going through piles of documents, and how he referred enthusiastically to the Strategic Framework as premise. His task, come hell or high water, would be to give effect to that which had been accepted, in 2000, as a framework for the future. Hell did come, and so did high water. I sometimes got the impression that, first, there were people who had never heard of the direction-setting Strategic Framework, or who had forgotten about it; and that second, some people could now kick themselves for having helped to build such potential for dramatic change into that document. Instead they kicked the man who came and unlocked that potential, who started doing what they had said they ought to do. Ironically, it is actually Chris' dedication to do something properly once one had pledged oneself to doing it, as well as his thoroughness, his precision regarding goals and deadlines, and his astonishing perseverance which in the end made him the target of some people's anger and antipathy. He kept them to the original letter of the undertaking which many had, in spirit, barely begun to engage with.

Because Chris had the vision of what he had come to do at Stellenbosch, he could endure and come to terms with the reactionary attacks on him as individualist, he could learn from and grow through the experience while he continued to do his job with diligence. And finally he could walk away. A long and complex task lies ahead, however, for the group that made so many destructive projections onto him as person and who are now without that screen.

Time will tell.

# OPEN LETTER TO CHRIS

## RUSSEL BOTMAN

*Vice-Chancellor and Rector, Stellenbosch University*

Dear Chris

Five years at any other place one would describe as a relatively short period, with the underlying emotional sense of the fleeting nature of time. One can hardly say this about your term as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of this University, which could at times be such an emotional powder-keg.

Your term of office here could be characterised as high-energy years. I think you managed to fit into five years what would, in a normal time-scale elsewhere, have been the impact of a much longer stay. These were five years which I can describe in no other way than: "it was the best of times; it was the worst of times". Perhaps the quotation is a bit hackneyed, but for me it is wholly appropriate for what I want to call "your high-intensity term of office". Please allow me considerable poetic licence in using it.

### *The best of times*

Where do we come from? Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? In your clear and incisive way you summarised the challenges of the *Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond* and condensed it into a five-point vision statement in way that could give direction to a university community that was seeking some foothold in a new and changing socio-political climate.

This highlighted practical facets of self-renewal and transformation, through which you led us during often intensely heated and emotional discussions. And when emotions made way for reason, you could construct, reconstruct, deconstruct and abstract in a way that was enriching for all of us. Logical and crystal clear.

Your convincing two-dimensional model for the academic sphere and the way it reflected the University's strategic goals raised some eyebrows at first, but your logical and meaningful exposition convinced the academics. This gave greater content and direction to Stellenbosch University's overarching business plans, and brought to life the vision statement in all our core activities and initiatives. You cast new light on the business of the University, and the University as a business.

Matters such as the first-year academy (where you strengthened my hand) and your influential thoughts on the positioning of Stellenbosch University as a research-driven institution made the academic adrenalin flow. As Vice-Rector (Teaching) I experienced your student-centred approach as manna from heaven. Exciting times – which is what colleagues in the University Management team and the faculties said repeatedly.



But this was the inside picture. The inconspicuous one. The world of e-mail encouragement, support for particular ideas and initiatives, your understanding of, and guidance in, difficult issues and decisions, your academic leadership and world-class value-added processes and structures to serve the academic cause of the University. Academically speaking, the proverbial "best of times".

### *The worst of times*

In my brief vote of thanks last year at the Management's end-of-year function I said that you were the one person who is so totally misunderstood. And today I am more convinced of this than ever. The complete reversal of public opinion since your arrival here from "Brink the builder" to "Brink the wrecker" typifies this for me.

The high expectations of you did not take full account of the real challenges of the task you had to perform. The path of change is never easy. Most people have a spontaneous resistance to change and anything that questions the old ways of doing things. Furthermore, it introduces uncertainties that most people find difficult to process – especially if a stable environment suddenly no longer offers the safety and security of the past.

You had to deal with difficult issues. Many of them are still with us and will be with us for many years. The language debate and diversity are two of the most familiar. These are issues that cannot be resolved overnight at the stroke of a pen. You set out on a path requiring courage and sometimes took "unpopular" decisions for the sake of the country's wider interests. In your search for the most practical way of dealing with language issues at the University, Management adopted a language model that allowed room for the growth of Afrikaans next to the world language, English.

Your determined seriousness about diversity and your attempts to make Stellenbosch University accessible to people who could not study here before were interpreted by your opponents as ringing the death knell for Afrikaans. For doing this you were condemned and attacked. The Afrikaans media were merciless in their campaign against you and fierce in their criticism of you. But through it you all you kept your dignity, even in the internal discussions, when the external struggle around you was at its most intense. Those of us who worked closely with you every day could not but admire you.

For Stellenbosch University this was "the worst of times". But in spite of this, you leave a university that is today so much better in so many fields: academically, financially, in the field of research and in terms of the University's service to the wider community. You strove for, and practised, the granting of equal opportunities and equity in the broadest sense. The vigour and energy with which you made the communities of Ida's Valley, Cloetesville and Kayamandi part of the University and the town are to your credit. It was always a heart-warming experience for me in talks with leaders from these communities to experience the goodwill towards the University that you managed to cultivate in the face of the suspicion and the pain left by apartheid. The recording of the suppressed history of the people of 'Die Vlakte', to which you gave impetus, won over many hearts for the University. And this is just one example.

I inherit a University that is in many ways more prepared to deal with the demands of our time, thanks to your leadership and initiatives over the past five years. History will not characterise your time here as fleeting or forgettable. As the saying goes: "Your efforts were not in vain."

Thank you for your collegiality, the moments of deep discussion and reflection on the role of Stellenbosch University and its role in the wider world, and for the opportunities of growth for me and for others. They have left me spiritually and intellectually enriched as a person, and have equipped me better for the task that the University community has entrusted to me as your successor.

I wish you well in facing the challenges that await you at Newcastle.

My best wishes to you, Tobeia and the children.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Russell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'R' and a long, sweeping tail that loops back.

*Russel*